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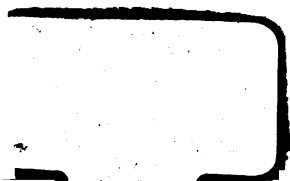
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THE
Castle and the Cottage in
Spain.

FROM the SPANISH of FERNAN GABALLERO.

By
LADY WALLACE.
Translator of "*Clara; or, Slave Life in Europe.*"

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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The Castle and the Cottage in Spain.

THE ALVAREDA FAMILY.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

AUTUMN had curtailed the days, and winter was knocking at the door with his frozen fingers. It was the hour when the labourers return to their homes, and when the sun casts a last cold glance at the earth which it is leaving.

Perico was walking quickly behind his ass, followed by Melampo, who rivalled his ancient friend and companion in gravity. The former remembered with horror the entrance of the French into the village, though six years had elapsed since that

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time, because having on that occasion placed his mistresses in safety, had cost the animal the most frantic gallop she had ever attempted in all her life.

When Perico arrived in his street, two pretty little children ran out to meet him, but just as they came up to him, a sonorous and solemn bell announced the Orison. Perico stopped and took off his sombrero. The ass and the dog, who from long habit knew the sound, also stopped, and the children likewise stood still.

When their father had concluded the prayer of the Mystery of the Annunciation, the children came closer to him, and said, "Give us your hand, father, to help us to jump on the donkey."

"Heaven bless you!" answered Perico, tenderly.

Any one observing the pleasant and intelligent face of Melampo, who, seated gravely, was watching this scene with evident interest, would have read in it the word—"Amen."

The child, who was eagerly waiting for his father to put him on the ass, asked him why every one stopped when the bell sounded.

"Don't you remember," said his sister Angela, "what Aunt Elvira told us, that when the hour sounds, dedicated to the Virgin, our guardian angels pause in their flight in the sky, through respect, and that if we went on our way we should be alone without them?"

"True, sister," answered Angelo, giving a most reckless lash to the donkey, on which his father had placed him; an assault of which, fortunately, the patient animal took no notice.

Six years have passed since the sad occurrence which we recounted, the miseries of which were still further aggravated by the unhappy young Marcela having lost the use of her reason on the day that, hid in the loft, she had witnessed the insult to her father, and the terrible vengeance taken by her brother, and his subsequent flight. Ventura had not been heard of since then, and all lamented him as dead; still Pedro's paternal fondness, and Elvira's attachment, made them cling to hope, though contrary to every reasonable supposition. Time, however, that mighty dissolvent, which absorbs both joys and sorrows, had, in some degree, assuaged their regrets, or at least

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taught them to endure the trial with more resignation; only Pedro, instead of his former gay jests, perpetually exclaimed, "My poor boy! my poor boy!"

Elvira, alone, was not affected by the influence of time. She was silently wasting away, like those clouds in the sky, which, instead of falling on the earth in noisy, pouring rain, go floating silently along, till they are lost to sight. She never complained, nor did the name of Ventura, whom she had regarded as the companion to be given to her by the Church, ever pass her lips.

"A worm is preying on her life," said Ana to her son Perico. "You don't see it; but I am not blind."

"But, mother," replied he, "why do you think so? Does she ever complain?"

"No, my son; but a mother can penetrate into the feelings of her sorrowing child," said Ana, with bitter grief.

Rita and Perico were happy, because Perico formed the happiness of both, by his loving heart, his gentle temper, and his conciliatory disposition. A year after her marriage, Rita had given birth to twins—a boy and a girl. On this occasion she

was at the point of death, and, in fact, owed her life to the unremitting and affectionate care of her husband and her family. She long remained weak and delicate, but at the moment when we resume the thread of our narrative, her strength was entirely restored, and the roses of youth and health bloomed on her cheeks more beautifully and luxuriantly than ever. On this night, when they were all assembled, Maria said,

“Maria Santissima! what anguish I endured last night in that terrible storm! I was in such a fright, that my bed trembled under me. I thought of all my sins, and confessed them to God. I prayed both long and loud, for I have always heard that when the voice of prayer is heard, the strength of the lightning is diminished. The storm seemed to call out, ‘The Moors, the Moors!’ as a warning, in order that they may be converted, and tremble at the wrath of the Almighty. But, at the dawn of day, when I saw the rainbow, I was comforted, because it is the sign, given by God to man, that he shall not be again punished by a second deluge. Holy Virgin! yet there are men who do not tremble at these warnings from God!”

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"And why should they tremble at a thing so perfectly natural?" said Rita.

"Natural!" replied Maria; "you may say the same of war or pestilence. Do you know what lightning is? A farmer told me that *it was a portion of the air on fire, and impelled by the wrath of God*. And where cannot the air penetrate, or the anger of the Almighty, and thunder also? A preacher said, that thunder is the voice of God in all its mighty power, and that God is much to be feared always, but most of all in thunder. Thus, my children, never forget that a storm is a warning from the Lord, that though He bears with our sins, it will not be for ever."

"The rain was much wanted," said Perico, "for the ground was very dry."

"The earth is always thirsty," said Rita.

"Father," said little Angela, "I know about the Virgin appearing on a white horse after the rain, and making the earth shine."

Angelo, who had no idea of being cut out by his sister, who was quicker than himself, said instantly, "And, father, I know something, too."

"Hush! hush!" cried Rita, "you little chatterboxes; you are as restless as frogs."

"May we go and play at a game, mother?" said the boy.

"Go and play with the cat's tail," replied Rita.

"Grandmother," said the little girl, "if you will tell me a story, I will say my Catechism to you. The enemies of the soul are three: the Devil, the world, and the flesh."

"I like that last enemy," said the boy.

"Be silent, child!" said his grandmother; "it does not mean the flesh that makes the olla."

"Then, what flesh is it?" asked Angelo.

"Learn the words at present," said Maria, "and when you have more sense you can apply what you have learned; but know this, that your flesh, that is, your appetites, incline you to be very greedy, and that gluttony is one of the deadly sins."

"There are seven of them," said the little girl, jumping up, and reciting them.

"Enough, enough!" said Rita. "Are you going to favour us with the whole Catechism? a very amusing performance for us."

"Is it possible, Rita," said Maria, who had been in all her glory while listening to her grandchildren, "that you do not like to hear the Word of God, teaching you by the mouth of your children? I remember that the first time they said the Lord's Prayer perfect to me, I could not help crying."

"Oh!" said her dutiful daughter-in-law, "you are capable of crying at a fandango."

The worthy mother made no reply to this saucy speech, but, turning to the children, she said,

"I am so pleased by your knowing your Catechism, that I will tell you a story, but not just now, so go and play."

In the meantime great gusts of wind were heard; the doors creaking, moved by some invisible force, and the old orange tree rustling in the court yard, as if remonstrating with the wind for disturbing its repose.

"There will not be a root left in the ground," said Perico.

"What a pour of rain," added Pedro; "a perfect torrent; the river will flood its banks."

"Do you see," said Angela to her little brother, "how the clouds are racing to-

night? They are galloping like greyhounds."

"Yes," said the boy. "Where are they going to?"

"To the sea, for water."

"Is there so much water in the sea?"

"Oh! yes; more than even in uncle Pedro's pond."

"The voice of the wind," said Maria, "appears to me the voice of the Evil One, and brings terror on its wings."

"You are one of those who are terrified at everything," said Rita; "I don't know when you mean to become a little more courageous. Get up, you lazy child," continued she, pushing away the little boy, who was leaning on her; "you eat enough to be able to stand on your own legs."

The boy, half asleep, lost his balance. Elvira gave a scream. Perico rushed to him, and took him up in his arms. Ana's distaff escaped from her hands, but she picked it up, without saying a syllable.

"If one day they are taken from you, Rita," said old Pedro, indignantly, "you will not mourn for them as I do for my son; there you will have the advantage over me."

"Quick, quick! supper is ready," said Maria, to change the conversation.

"So, mother Maria," said Perico, "you are afraid of everything, "even of witches?"

"No, Perico," replied his mother-in-law, "certainly not; for the Bible forbids us to believe in witchcraft, or sorcery; but I do fear those things that God permits, for the purpose of punishing men, above all, if they are supernatural."

"Are there any such things? Did you ever see any?" asked Rita.

"Of course, such things exist," said Maria; "can you doubt it?"

"Oh! it is very clear, I suppose."

"Why should you deny that extraordinary things have occurred?"

"Oh! that I don't contend against; and one of them would be the day on which you did not give me a lecture; but I have no faith in the supernatural. I am like St. Thomas."

"No great reason to glorify yourself on that account. It is a pity you don't rather say you resembled St. Peter when he proved faithless."

"Did you ever see a ghost of any kind, Señora? But I know you have as capacious a maw as a shark."

A loud noise that was heard outside, at the door of the courtyard, caused a general pause.

"Good Heavens! who can it be?" said Maria, timidly.

"Nobody," said Perico, laughing; "who could it be! It is the wind, no doubt, which has been blowing into every corner all night."

"Mother," said Angela, "I am frightened; take me in your arms, as father has Angelo."

"What stuff," said Rita, who was in very bad humour; "don't bore me!"

"I should like to know," said Pedro, after a pause, "whether those who laugh at the very objects they dread, don't know pretty well what fear is?"

"Perico, Perico!" said Maria, hurriedly; "I hear footsteps in the court!"

"Mother-in-law," replied Perico, "there is no cause for either fear or dismay; don't you hear it is the rushing of the watercourse?"

"For my part," said Pedro, in a subdued, trembling voice, "since the terrific day so much blood was spilt in my house, I....."

"Pedro, Pedro! what is the use of reminding us of such things? Do you wish

to sadden our hearts? What is the use of alluding to the past, as it is, alas! irremediable?" said Ana.

"But, Ana," argued Pedro, "what I suffer, makes me often so miserable, that it is some relief to me to talk about it. Alone, all alone, as I am at home, and many a night, when all is silence, and I cannot sleep, I see distinctly—yes, quite distinctly, the Grenadier my son killed. I see him just as I saw him in life, with his fur cap, and his uniform, rise out of the well into which he was thrown, and come into the room where he was murdered, to look for the stains of his blood on the floor. I see him before my eyes, tall, rigid, terrible!"

At this moment the door opened, and a figure, tall, rigid, and terrible, in a French Grenadier's uniform, and fur cap, appeared on the threshold.

All present were so confounded, that they stood motionless.

"The Lord have mercy on us all!"

Angelo hid his head on his father's shoulder, and Angela crouched under her grandmother's apron.

"Ventura!" murmured Elvira, faintly, sinking into her mother's arms.

Melampo capered about like a distracted creature.

He had been recognised at the same moment by the devoted woman, for whom no oblivion exists, and by the trusty dog, to whom infidelity is unknown.

Pedro started up, but the old man was in such agitation that he staggered, and would have fallen, if Ventura who had thrown off his cloak and Grenadier's cap, had not rushed up to him and supported him in his arms. It is easier to imagine than to depict the scene that ensued; a scene of confusion, of ejaculations, and exclamations of mingled delight and surprise; of fervent thanks to Heaven, and tears.

When Ventura could extricate himself from his father's arms, which fondly clung round the neck of that son, whom he could as yet scarcely believe that he was actually embracing, he fixed his eyes on Elvira, whom his mother was sustaining, and bathing her face with a handkerchief steeped in vinegar; but she was no longer the Elvira with whom he parted six years ago. Pale, thin, and attenuated, she looked as if she were rapidly fading away from life. Ventura's brilliant eyes were sad, and softened

by a profound expression of sorrow, when, with the frank sincerity of a peasant, he said,

“Have you been ill, Elvira? you are sadly changed.”

“She will soon get well now! no fear of that!” exclaimed Pedro, whose joy had again awakened his former gay self. “It is your absence, Ventura, that made her so ill—never hearing of you—and no wonder! Why did you never write us a single line to tell us you were safe?”

“My serjeant might certainly have written,” replied Ventura; “I have been in France, and a prisoner—but I have a great deal to tell you. But how well you look!” said he to Rita, who from the moment Ventura had entered the room, never took her eyes off the handsome young man, whose moustaches, and uniform, and gallant military bearing, had a great effect on her. “You are indeed a handsome girl! Perico spoils you famously, I suppose? And you, Perico! as wise as ever? Are these your children? What pretty creatures! Heaven preserve them!” so saying, Ventura stooped down to caress them. At this moment Maria, coming behind Ven-

tura, threw her arms round him, covering his face with kisses and tears.

"Dear Aunt Maria!" said Ventura; "how you must have prayed for me! I dare say you made at least a hundred offerings, and at least as many vows."

"I did indeed, my son; and to-morrow I mean to sell my fattest hens, to send the price to Santa Anna to have the mass I vowed offered up for you."

"Ana, you don't say a word," observed Ventura; "are you not glad to see me?"

"Yes, Ventura, I am," replied Ana; "but I was occupied in trying to restore my Elvira. God alone knows the joy I feel in seeing your face once more!" and she added, looking at her daughter's pallid countenance, "and how many grateful thanks I offer up for your return, if it be for good."

"Pray why should it not be for the good of us all?" said Pedro; "except, indeed, my kids and your chickens, who must give up the ghost in the course of a month, the precise time requisite to publish the marriage banns."

"Don't be in such a hurry," replied Ana, smiling; "a wedding, my old friend, is not

like a fritter, that you can fry in a moment."

"Oh! let every owl have its mate," said Pedro, rising; "there is one window in the street, which will no longer be solitary."

"Pedro," said Rita, laughing, "you will have no more trouble with the Frenchman at the bottom of the well, he won't come out to-night."

"Amen! amen! I hope not," answered the good old man.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN they assembled the night after, Ventura brought with him a black dog, that he called Tambour. Never, by any possible chance, had it so happened that a strange dog had been admitted to these evening meetings, so that scarcely had the stranger entered, wagging his tail pleasantly, his curly hair beautifully washed, and with all the ease of a polished member of society, than Melampo, who very slightly esteemed such advantages, and by no means admired elegant idlers, flew at him in the most savage manner, and tumbled him over in an instant, holding him down with one of his paws, in the same attitude as that of the lion on the Waterloo monument, though such an ambitious idea was quite foreign to Melampo's intentions.

In vain did Perico beat him, and Ventura give him hearty kicks, in vain did Pedro throw his sombrero at him, and the women scream in chorus, Melampo was blind and deaf to their indignation, and had evidently entirely lost his usual moderation and docility. Who could have believed it? the dog had emancipated himself! But when at last Angelo threw his arms round his neck, and said, coaxingly, "Go to your corner, good dog!" Melampo let loose his prey, and slunk away with his tail between his legs, as if ashamed of having attacked an inferior, and having reached his corner, he turned his face sulkily to the wall, that he might not be a witness of the caresses bestowed on the intruder, and of all the accomplishments that such a well combed gentleman, with a tufted tail—an appendage peculiarly offensive in Melampo's eyes—was sure to display.

"In the first place," said Perico, "will you explain to me, Ventura, how it happened that you suddenly appeared among us, as if you had dropped from the roof, for we heard no sound of any door being opened?"

"Oh! it's not difficult to explain," said

Ventura. "When I arrived, I went straight home, and there Curra, whom my father lodges, in return for her looking after his house, opened the door to me and said you were here, so wishing to take you by surprise, I jumped over the wall of the courtyard, as I used to do when a boy."

"I was quite right then, that night," observed Maria, "in saying that I was sure I heard the door of the court opened, and steps passing along."

"Now," said Perico, "relate to us all your adventures. Were you wounded?"

"Wounded!" answered Pedro, "look at his breast, and you will see the mark of a bullet, which, but for this silver button, would have gone straight to his heart; look at his arm—and the wound....."

"What matter, father?" interrupted Ventura, "they are all cured now. When I fled," pursued he, "I went along by the river, and reached San Lucar, where I embarked for Cadiz; there I enlisted in the regiment of guards, sent by the Duke del Infantado. I formed a great friendship for one of my comrades, and we were like brothers. Shortly after, we embarked for Tarifa, where at length we succeeded in attacking

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the French in their flank, while the English assailed them in front, which caused the battle of Barossa, when the French fled to Jerey, and we took possession of their camp. In the thick of the fight, I said to my comrade, 'Come along and take that Frenchman's colours from him; his eagle looks so haughty that I mean to try for it.' So my comrade killed him, and carried off the standard; in a second we were surrounded by Frenchmen, wishing to get back their eagle; but we said, 'Not at all, your bird fell into our jaws, and never more shall it be disgorged, not even if Pepe Botellas, or *Napoladron*, came themselves in person!' We placed it against an olive tree, ourselves in front, and said, 'Now come and take it!' and they came, for they are determined demons, although they fight for a bad cause. They killed my poor comrade, and they would have finished me of course, for there were so many of them, and what I grieved for most was the thoughts of the eagle being retaken, but our soldiers rushed up and saved me. But the enemy left me in a sad state; I could not have believed I had so much blood in my veins. They brought

me and my eagle before the colonel, who said I had done well, and that he would give me the San Fernando cross for having taken the eagle; but I said, 'Colonel, it was not I who took it, but my poor comrade who is killed!' and then I fainted away. When I recovered my senses, I was in hospital, and I have heard no more of the cross."

"Your own fault," said Rita; "why did you tell the colonel it was not you who took the eagle?"

Ventura looked at her, as if he did not quite understand her meaning.

"Always be straightforward," said Pedro. "Go on!"

A tear glittered on Elvira's eyelashes.

"Scarcely was I convalescent, than we embarked for Huélva, and I was engaged in the battle of Albuca, against Marshal Soult. Soon afterwards, I was taken prisoner; but I escaped, and joined the army at Granada, commanded by the Duke de Parque, and along with them, pursued the enemies to the Pyrenees. I then returned to Madrid, where I have been ever since, until at last I got leave."

"Ventura," said Maria, admiringly,

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"you have seen more of the world than even the storks!"

"Oh!" said Ventura, "what I have seen is nothing; but I know a man, who went to the north with General Romana, where the earth is covered with so thick a mantle of snow, that sometimes people are buried under it!"

"Maria Santissima!" said Maria, in amazement.

"But they are good people, though there they don't know the use of the knife."

"Heaven help them!" exclaimed Maria.

"In that country there is no oil, and they eat black bread."

"That country would not do for me," said Ana; "for I always eat the very best bread—indeed I eat nothing else."

"What a detestable olla podrida they would make there, with black bread and no oil!" said Maria, perfectly horror-struck.

"They don't eat that," said Ventura.

"Then what do they eat?"

"Potatoes and milk," said Ventura.

"Very good food, and wholesome for the chest."

"But the worst part of that country,

Maria, is that there are no nuns or monks there."

"What do you say, my son?" exclaimed she.

"That there are few churches, and these look like deserted hospitals, without chapels or altars, without images or holy shrines."

"How very dreadful!" exclaimed they all, except Maria, who was so shocked that she stood like a statue, but soon clasping her hands fervently, she exclaimed, "Oh! my Church, my Holy Mother, my blessed country, happy am I that I was born in this land, and shall die in it! What a blessing, my son, that you did not go to that country of heretics—how dreadful!"

"Do you think it would have been infectious like the plague?" said Rita, laughing.

"I don't say that, Heaven forbid I should!" replied Maria, embarrassed.

"All that is bad is infectious," said Pedro; "let every one remain in his own country—I could lay a wager that no good is ever brought back to us by those who have been in other lands....."

"I hope you except the poor soldiers?" said Elvira.

"I suppose that is why I have always had so much affection for them," said Maria; "just because they defend the good cause of our Holy Church. I pity them, too, because they go through such toil and sufferings, and that was why I tried so hard to buy off my nephew, Miguel, from the service."

"She makes me laugh," said Rita, turning to Ventura. "She lighted candles to all the saints during the expedition, and as she had no candlesticks, she fastened some empty shells against the wall with lime and mortar, twisted some wicks, filled them with oil, and began to recite her prayers. Then Miguel's mother arrived to tell her that her son had enlisted. My mother, on hearing this, put out the lights as if saying to the saints, 'You may remain in the dark, for I don't require your good offices any longer.'"

"What things you do say, Rita!" replied the good old woman; "God judges our hearts very differently—I was resigned, my dear, I was resigned—it was the will of God, and what God refuses to do, even the saints cannot accomplish."

CHAPTER III.

ELVIRA'S joy was as short lived as it had been great. What can escape the eyes of those who love? Are there not incidents in life which, like the fatal wind of Guadarrama, seem only a sudden blast, and yet destroy life? Before Rita and Ventura had themselves realised the mutual attraction which influenced them, Elvira had offered a second time her grief and the sacrifice of her lost love to God; and this time without the most remote hope. The patient and resigned girl dreaded a rupture between herself and Ventura, as the definite harbinger of some catastrophe; and, like a martyr, she continued to receive, without venturing to repulse them, the cold demonstrations of a love as pallid and feeble as herself. Ventura's former attach-

ment was now decaying before the bright flame of a fresh passion, as sparkling, bright, and beautiful as the object who inspired it. His visits to Elvira's window became every night shorter and colder. There was scarcely an occasion when some gesture, look, or sentiment, were not sympathetically felt by these two, who, like moths, took pleasure in fluttering round the flame by an instinctive impulse which mutually attracted them, though equally undefined by themselves, and unchecked by others; for a married woman forgetting her duties, or a young man ceasing to love his betrothed, is a thing quite unprecedented among the people, and more especially for the family whose history we are relating; it was, in fact, so incredible, as to appear quite impossible. Rita, however, knew neither curb nor restraint, and military life had proved a bad school of morals for Ventura. One morning, Perico said to Elvira, before going to his labour in the fields, finding her sitting in the court,

“Sister, here is money to buy some coloured clothes; the mourning you vowed to wear till Ventura's return is now at an

end, and I wish to see your face and your dress gay and bright."

Elvira, with difficulty suppressing her tears, answered,

"Keep your money, brother; every day I feel weaker; I ought rather to think of making my peace with God, than have my mind occupied by marriage clothes, or change the colour which must cover me in my coffin."

"Don't speak thus, sister," exclaimed Perico; "you cut me to the heart! but it is too much your custom to take a gloomy view of everything. When you are as happy with Ventura as I am with Rita, and when you have little children like ours to gladden your heart, you will no longer feel these apprehensions. Come!" said he to his children, "come and talk to your aunt."

Elvira looked after her brother as he went away, her heart lacerated with the most profound anguish, the more acute because she was forced to stifle it, fearing that any complaint on her part would serve as a cry of alarm, with regard to an evil which was irremediable.

"Aunt," said Angelo, "nothing will

make Melampo stay at home when father goes out!"

"He does his duty like a good dog," answered Elvira.

"Why is he called Melampo?" continued the boy, with that love of questioning peculiar to children, and which their elders too often ridicule instead of satisfying.

"He is called thus," answered Elvira, "because it is the name of one of those dogs who went to Bethlehem with the shepherds to see the Holy Child in the manger. They were three, Melampo, Cubilon, and Lobina; and dogs with these names never go mad."

"Aunt," exclaimed Angelo, running after a little bird, "I couldn't catch that swallow."

"It is not a swallow," said his aunt; "for they never come till the spring, and no one ever injures or molests them."

"Why, aunt?"

"Because they are friendly with men, and put their trust in them, and make their nests under our roofs; besides, they were the birds that extracted the thorns

from our Blessed Saviour's crown, when hanging on the cross."

At this moment, Angelo tripped and fell, on which he began to cry. Rita rushed impetuously from her house, and taking him in her arms, said,

"What's the matter, my boy?" and kissing him passionately, she carried him into her mother's house, and then returned to the court to wash, while Elvira also went in. We have already said that this court, contiguous to that of Pedro, was separated from it by a low wall. Rita, according to the custom of the country, began to sing.

The people of Andalusia have stored up in their memory perfect archives of couplets and songs, so varied in their conceptions, that it would be difficult to find a single thing that they cannot express by means of rhyme.

A pleasant melodious voice responded to Rita's song from the adjoining court, thus establishing a musical conversation.

In the meantime, Elvira was seated beside her mother, sewing; her gentle, calm countenance was far from betraying the anguish of her heart, nevertheless,

Ana, gazing at her with the penetrating eyes of a mother's love, said to herself, "Is it possible that the hopes restored by Ventura's return, are to be disappointed? Will God take my child to Himself?" At this moment, the children ran in quite out of breath, shouting out—

"Aunt Elvira! grandmother! Uncle Pedro says that the ass has a little foal beside her, since last night, in the stable. We never knew that—come with us to see it, come along!" And the one child dragging Ana and the other Elvira with them, they went to the court, and threw the door wide open suddenly. What a shock to Ana, the respected woman, the loving mother! Ventura and Rita were talking familiarly alone in this retired and solitary place, and their hands clasped! Ventura, as quick as lightning, placing his foot on the wheel of a cart close to the wall, jumped over it and disappeared. Rita furious, but with her usual cool impertinence, continued to wash, and resumed her song. The children had run on straight to the stable. Ana supported poor Elvira, who was almost inanimate, towards her house, and there, on her

mother's breast, who could deeply sympathize in her sorrows, she gave way to the relief of a burst of tears and sobs, while still they heard the shameless Rita continuing her singing.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER a sleepless night of anguish, Ana arose, apparently more tranquil, cherishing some hope from the determination she had formed to speak to Rita, and to show her the precipice to which she was hastening blindfold; trusting that she might yet persuade her to retrace her steps. Ana had a degree of dignity in her manner, which would have impressed any one in whose heart the noble quality of esteem had not been extinguished by pride, that most fatal of all enemies to man, for of all others it is the most daring: boldly braving virtue, taking root, and domineering like nothing else, hiding its perversity under a captivating exterior, falsifying ideas, condemning and blaming as superstition the holy sentiment of vene-

ration, which entered the world attended by the blessing of God. Pride not unfrequently strives to represent itself as dignity; but it never succeeds, because dignity, unlike pride, is not exercised at the cost of others, but leaves and maintains all things in their proper place, even more admirable in honouring others, than in being honoured. Neither position, knowledge, nor wealth, confer true dignity; and least of all arrogance. It is the simple reflection of a lofty soul, sensible of its strength. It is natural, like the bright complexion of health, and not fictitious like the coarse red of paint.

There are persons, however, who so exalt themselves, that while resting with astonishing audacity on a false and presumptuous foundation, they display a degree of intrepidity and arrogance, unknown to those who lean on the firm rock of infallible justice, and Eternal Truth. Rita was one of those beings, who can tread a crooked path with a firm step, and a bold demeanor.

The instinctive good sense of the peasants, who are quite alive to the definition we have just given, understood the cha-

racter of both these women, and defined them admirably in their concise manner, by saying of Ana—"She teaches the law of God without words"—and of Rita—"She fears neither God nor the devil."

Rita was sewing when Ana entered, who, first carefully bolting the door, seated herself opposite her daughter-in-law.

"You are well aware, Rita," said she, calmly, "that I never liked your marriage."

"Are you come here to-day, to say that you have changed your opinion?" said Rita, impertinently. Ana, without appearing to observe this, continued,

"I have often thought you foolish....."

"There is no need to be a conjuror to find that out," replied Rita; "I am quite open and frank. I say what I think, and do what I think best."

"The harm is not in saying what you think, but in thinking what you say."

"Oh! no doubt it would be much better for me, were I to affect to be a meek dying lamb, as some people do, who appear wreaths of snow, but are in reality rocks of salt."

This was a hit at Elvira, which Ana perfectly understood, but not deigning to

notice it, she continued, "But you deceived me; you are more than foolish."

"Now comes the squall," said Rita. "Let us have it!"

"I never thought," said Ana, "that what has happened, would ever happen in this house."

"It never rains but it pours!" said Rita, angrily, though affecting to continue her work composedly.

"Even admitting," continued Ana, "that it is not your intention to wrong my son....."

"Oh! now we come to the point," said Rita, audaciously.

"And to cause the misery and death of my poor girl....."

"Say no more," answered Rita; "this is the real hitch. Because Ventura has no wish to marry a half dead creature, who must ask the sexton's leave to fulfil her engagement, I am to get the blame! And solely because his disposition is gay, and he prefers jesting with me, who am equally merry, to drinking marshmallows tea with Elvira. How can I help that?"

Ana allowed Rita to finish her speech, her countenance showing no alteration,



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The little white thing is gone.

There is a hole there, and the
the children in their minds
is wrong of him. — She looks to
of him without words — and of the
the little white thing is gone.

The man sitting there has said
that something is wrong in his mind
and maybe he might be bad.

"You are not alone," said the
man, "but I am not so strong."

"You are not strong," said the
man, "but I am not so strong."

"You are not strong," said the
man, "but I am not so strong."

"You are not strong," said the
man, "but I am not so strong."

"You are not strong," said the
man, "but I am not so strong."

"You are not strong," said the
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man, "but I am not so strong."

"You are not strong," said the
man, "but I am not so strong."

"You are not strong," said the
man, "but I am not so strong."

red, "But you deceived
me foolish."

"I equal," said Rita.

"I" said Ann. "That
would ever happen in

"in point?" said Rita.
"I am a woman, her

continued Ann. "That
is a very good

is a good point," said

her sister, and then she

continued, "I am a

very good woman, and

is a very good woman, and

is a very good woman, and

is a very good woman, and

is a very good woman, and

is a very good woman, and

is a very good woman, and

creasing severity, "that with men, shame is only washed out by blood."

"You would be only too thankful," said Rita, "if all the things you said to your son before our marriage were to come to pass; and you will be much disappointed if you can't succeed in making mischief between us. I know what I am about. Perico is a man of peace, and he trusts his wife. Leave us therefore alone, and we shall be happy enough if you don't meddle. You would be better employed preparing the wedding things of the bride, your daughter—this *pattern girl*—who is so anxious to be married."

On hearing this string of insults and impertinences, the patience and forbearance of the excellent Ana nearly gave way; but the holy angel of resignation, whom God sends to mothers to enable them to bear their crosses, overcame every angry feeling, and Ana went away looking at Rita with a sad smile, which had more of compassion than even of contempt.

The anxious mother was in a state of great depression at the entire failure of her remonstrances; and she determined to confide in Pedro, in order that he might expos-

tulate with his son; but just at this time the bailiff of the property on which Ventura had been employed, died, and Ventura was appointed to replace him. His absence, though interrupted by frequent visits to his own home, was a considerable relief to the troubled mind of Ana, who said to herself, even a day more of life, is life.

CHAPTER V.

THE happy anniversary of the Nativity had arrived, and a little feast had been prepared for the children, who had decorated the whole room with lavender, and rosemary, and mastic, and other odoriferous, leafy plants. Perico brought home these herbs to his children, with the same delight that a lover feels in bringing flowers to his bride. On Christmas Day Perico attended early mass, and afterwards went to take a look at his crops, as he had heard that some goats had been seen near his boundary.

He returned about ten o'clock, and found the children alone.

"Oh, father! I am so glad you are come," cried they, running merrily to meet him; "for we have been all alone here."

"Where are grandmother and aunt Elvira?"

"They went to High Mass."

"And who did you stay with?"

"With mother."

"And where is she?"

"Now, we don't know; we were in the room beside her, singing and dancing, when Ventura came in, and mother said we must take our music somewhere else, for her head ached; and when we were going out, I heard her say to Ventura, that it was a very good thing to turn us out of the room, for that these little angels were famous spies of the devil! Is that true, father? What are spies of the devil?"

Who has not, in the course of his life, either in trifling or important circumstances, experienced how a single word is a key to open and explain; a torch illuminating both the past and the present, drawing from the stores of memory, and placing in their true light circumstances and incidents that had passed unperceived, by degrees combining to form a judgment, to establish a conviction, or to convey a certainty? Such was the effect that the words of Rita, with regard to the children being spies,

caused Perico, repeated by the lips of innocence. The truth, tardy but appalling, was manifest to his eyes, hitherto blinded by faith and trust; and suspicion entered his honest heart, hitherto so shielded by his entire confidence in his wife, that not a single doubt had ever crossed his mind.

"Father, father!" cried the children, on seeing him stagger and turn pale.

Perico did not hear them.

"Grandmother Ana," said they, "make haste, for father is ill!"

On hearing his mother's step, Perico turned his bewildered eyes on her, and in her stern features he seemed to read the same terrible prophecy for the future, which she had formerly pronounced, when attempting to dissuade him from his marriage—"a bad daughter will make a bad wife!" He rushed out of the house in agony of mind, muttering between his clenched teeth some excuse, which was inaudible. Ana put her head out of the window, and was tranquillized by seeing her son take the path leading to the fields.

"I think some one told Perico that cattle were straying near his farm?"

"Possibly, mother ; I heard so yesterday," replied Elvira.

The hour of dinner, however, arrived, and Perico did not return. This was singular on Christmas Day, but with country people, who have no fixed hours for their meals, it was not alarming. At nightfall Pedro and Maria came at the usual hour, but alone.

"Has Ventura not been in the village to-day?" asked Ana.

"Yes," answered Pedro ; "but there is a feast, where he is sure to meet all his friends. He is so fond of dancing, that he would lose his dinner any day for the sake of a fandango."

"And Rita," said Elvira, "was she in your house, Aunt Maria?"

"Yes, she came to see me, but she was going with a neighbour to the feast. I told her it would be better not to go, but she never pays the smallest attention to anything I say."

"You were right, Maria," said Pedro ; "a respectable married woman, and a broken leg, should both stay at home."

They all remained sad and silent, when Perico came in suddenly.

The dim light of the lamp, softened by a shade, prevented them observing his agitation and the change in his features. His burning eyes were encircled by a dark ring, such as is generally produced by a long illness; his dry, red lips were like those of a fever patient. He glanced quickly round the family circle, saying, sternly—

“Where is Rita?”

All were silent; at last Maria said, timidly—

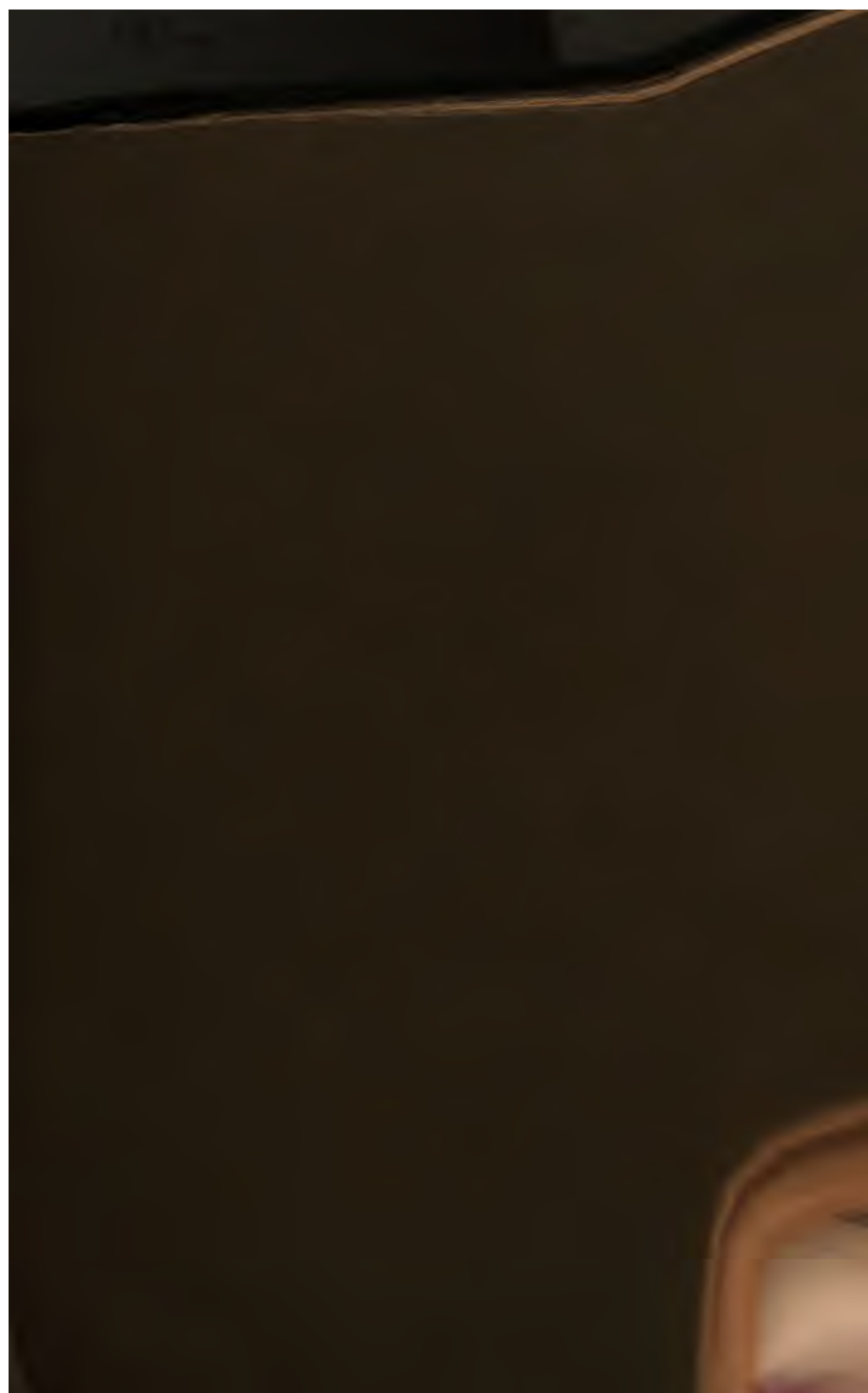
“My son, she is gone with a neighbour to the feast. As this is Christmas Day, I dare say that was the reason she went. She will soon be back.”

Perico darted impetuously out of the room, without uttering a syllable

His mother rose hurriedly, and followed him out, but he was gone.

“I’ll tell you what, Maria,” said Pedro, “Perico would be wise in chastising her soundly; I, for one, would say nothing against it.”

“Don’t say that, Pedro,” replied Maria. “Perico is incapable of lifting his hand against a woman. Poor thing! what harm is there in jumping about and dancing?



CHAPTER VI.

VENTURA and Rita were dancing together at the feast, animated by all that intoxicates the young and the foolish; blinding the eyes of reason, extinguishing prudence, and causing victims to forfeit human esteem: this is, wine, love, and an excited style of dancing encouraged by imprudent, intoxicating applause.

In truth, Ventura and Rita were a handsome pair. Rita's pretty graceful head was adorned with flowers; she moved with that inimitable grace peculiar to her countrywomen, which is, at will, either modest or bold; her black eyes sparkled like polished jet, and the castanets in her fingers sounded like an exciting challenge. Ventura was a fitting partner, and never was a fandango danced with more grace or animation, and

the enthusiastic singers sang extempore couplets in honour of the brilliant couple.

At the winding up of the dance, just as the joining of hands, and looks of endearment, were at their height, Perico arrived, and stood on the threshold of the door.

Every one being entirely occupied with the dance, his arrival was unobserved, and Ventura conducting Rita to a room in which he had been previously drinking, passed close to Perico without seeing him, as he was standing beyond the light of the dancing room, and thus he heard words pass between Ventura and Rita, that seemed to confirm the extent of his misfortune; the levity of the wife he so fondly loved, the mother of his children, and the treachery of a friend and a brother.

The stroke was so terrible, that the unhappy man stood for a moment quite stupefied, but he quickly hurried after them.

Rita was standing in front of a mirror, arranging the flowers in her hair.

"Withered!" said Ventura to her; "why do you wear roses? don't you know that they always wither from envy, in the hair of a pretty woman?"

"Ventura," said one of his friends, "I

suspect that the fruit you like best, is forbidden fruit."

"I confess," said Ventura, laughing, "I like it all the better, because it is forbidden."

"A most unbecoming speech," said a friend of Perico's.

One of those present took hold of the speaker's arm, and drawing him aside, said, "Hush, man! don't you see that he has been drinking? why discuss so dangerous a subject? what have you to do with it, if Perico, whom it solely concerns, does not object?"

"Who dares to say that Perico Alvareda submits to an insult?" cried Perico, advancing into the centre of the room, as pale as if just risen from his coffin.

On hearing her husband's voice, Rita glided away through the crowd like a snake, and disappeared.

"You are just come in time to look after your wife," said some mischief-making scapegraces, laughing loudly, who formed a kind of retinue to the brave soldier, and graceful dancer.

"Gentlemen," said Perico, crossing his arms on his chest, with a gesture of sup-

pressed rage, is there anything ludicrous in my face?"

"At all events, there is something that excites our mirth," said Ventura.

All burst out laughing again.

"It is lucky for you," said Perico, in a voice half suffocated by fury, that I have no arms."

"Hold your tongue, you fool!" exclaimed Ventura, with a sneer; "the meek lamb should not attempt to bully, so don't bluster any more, you simpleton; and instead of taking fancies into your head, go home and nurse your children."

On hearing these words, Perico rushed on Ventura, who staggered under the sudden shock, but he quickly recovered his balance, and seizing Perico by the waist, with the strength and agility peculiar to him, he threw him on the ground, and placed one of his knees on his breast.

Fortunately Perico did not possess a knife, and Ventura did not take out his, but he clutched Perico's throat with both hands, repeating furiously, "You, you! whom I could grind into powder with three of my fingers, you to lay hands on me? you! a miserable locust, a coward, a sneak, brought

up at your mother's apron string—you assault me—me!"

At this moment Pedro came in, evidently in great perturbation. "Ventura!" he shouted out; "Ventura! what are you doing? are you mad?"

Ventura on seeing his father, let go Perico, and started to his feet. "You are intoxicated," said Pedro, distracted by indignation and grief. "You are intoxicated, which always makes you savage and quarrelsome. Come home," added he, grasping his arm, "and go before me."

Ventura obeyed without replying, for in Pedro's words, he had not only heard a father's reproaches, but the voice of reason, conscience, and feeling; his nobler impulses were revived, and he was equally ashamed of the sudden quarrel, and of the cause that had given rise to it. Thus he hung his head, and without remonstrance left the room instantly, followed by his father.

In the meantime, Perico had been lifted from the ground, by degrees recovering from the dizziness caused by the fierce pressure of Ventura's gripe. He passed his hand across his forehead, and glaring on those who surrounded him, like a

wounded lion, he went out, saying in a hoarse voice—

“He has destroyed us both!”

As Ventura had been carried off by his father, the men present allowed Perico to go away without opposition.

“The affair won’t end there,” said one, shaking his head.

“That’s plain enough,” said another; “besides, he has been half choked, and even a saint could not endure such wrongs!”

“The worthless woman should be put into a house of correction for the rest of her life,” exclaimed a third.

In the meantime, Perico had arrived at home, muttering in short, broken sentences, “A sneak! a coward! my face exciting laughter! and *he* said so. A meek lamb! this to me! whose honour was never tarnished, till he stained it and trampled it under foot! but we shall see.”

He went into his room, and took down his gun. “Father!” exclaimed little Angela’s childish voice, in the adjoining room, “we are all alone.”

“And alone you must remain,” murmured Perico.

The voices of his children still continued calling "Father, father!"

"You have no longer a father!" cried Perico, rushing out of the room.

He leant his gun against the trunk of the old orange tree, in order to fetch ammunition to load it, but as if the ancient protector of the family wished to enter its protest against the affair, the gun slipped off the tree and fell to the ground, and the leaves, as if equally moved by a sad presentiment, rustled mournfully.

Perico was just going out, when he met his mother face to face, who unable to sleep from anxiety, had heard her son come in.

"Where are you going, Perico?" said she.

"To my farm, for I hear some goats have got in there."

"Were you at the feast?"

"Yes."

"And Rita?"

"She was not there—Maria was joking."

Ana breathed more freely, although on the other hand, the unusually gruff tone of her son, and the bitterness of his replies, surprised his mother, who was already sufficiently uneasy.

"Don't go out to-night, my son," said she, in a supplicating voice.

"Not go out? and pray why?"

"Why? because my heart tells me that you had better stay at home, and you know my heart to be faithful and true."

"Yes, I know *your's* is," answered Perico, with such acrimony, that his mother began to fear, that in spite of not having seen Rita at the feast, he had begun to suspect something.

"Whatever you may know, I advise you not to go out to-night."

"Mother," answered Perico, "women often exasperate men by trying to govern them; they say I have been tied to your apron strings, and I am resolved now to go alone." And he walked towards the door.

"Can this be my son?" murmured the poor mother; "something is wrong—something is sadly wrong."

When Perico opened the door, his faithful companion, Melampo, trotted up to him.

"Back!" said Perico, giving him a kick.

The poor animal, little accustomed to such harsh treatment, retreated in surprise, but immediately, with that total want of all resentment, which renders a dog a pattern

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of abnegation, and fidelity in affection, he made a rush at the door, but it was shut, on which Melampo began to howl mournfully, another proof of the instinct of these animals thus announcing approaching calamity by their lamentations.

CHAPTER VII.

ON the following day, Ventura, whose head had been cleared by sleep of the vapours which had obscured his reason, rose profoundly ashamed, and deeply repentant, listening in respectful silence to the just and deserved remonstrances of his father, on his conduct, past and present.

“You are perfectly right, father,” said he. “I do not defend myself, I can only say, that I did not know what I was doing. It grieves me enough! wine, cursed wine! I will make a contrite apology to Perico, before all the village—and I do this for my own satisfaction, quite as much as in honour of him whom I have wronged.”

“Will you do me one favour, my son?” said Pedro.

“One hundred, father!”

"Will you marry Elvira?"

"With the greatest possible pleasure."

"And will you treat her well?"

"I will, by this cross," said he, making the sign of the cross.

"You will go to Alcalá?"

"To the rock of Peñon, if you wish it, father."

Pedro looked at his son with much emotion, and then said, "Then may God's blessing go with you, my son!"

They went together to Ana's house, in search of Perico, but Ana said he was gone out. On seeing them, and still more on observing the joy and satisfaction reflected on Pedro's countenance, the vague but distressing apprehensions of Ana were tranquillized. The tenderness and eagerness with which Ventura sought out Elvira, revived her hopes, while Pedro said to her with a myterious air, pointing to Ventura,

"This lad is in a hurry to be married, so you must not go slowly to work with the wedding things; young people are not sluggish, like us."

Shortly after, they went away; Ventura to the property of which he had been appointed bailiff, and Pedro, who was going

to his cattle fold, offered to accompany his son part of the way. When at last they separated, Ventura went into the thicket of olive trees. Pedro looked after him, saying inwardly,

"No king can have a better son than I have. It would not be easy to find his match, in all Spain; his exterior is charming, but his soul still more so."

Scarcely had Ventura gone on a few paces among the olive trees, than he saw Perico at a little distance emerge from behind an olive tree, with his gun in his hand.

"Thanks to you," cried Perico, "it seems there is something risible in my face, as I was told last night. But I hold now in my hands, what will put a stop to laughing. I am a sneak and a coward! but I will soon efface all these insults and opprobrious epithets!"

"Perico, what are you going to do?" exclaimed Ventura, rushing up to him to catch his arm—too late! The shot was fired, and Ventura fell to the ground mortally wounded!

Pedro heard the shot, and trembled. "What can it be?" he exclaimed. "It can

only be Ventura, firing at some partridge," added he; "but as the report sounded close at hand, I will go and see."

He hurried along the path his son had taken; he saw a mass lying on the ground; he approached it—"Heavens and earth! a murdered man!" The man was his son. Poor old Pedro fell by his side.

"Father," said Ventura, "I have strength left, if you will help me, to go to the farm close by. I wish to receive the last sacraments, and to die like a Christian."

The Lord of Mercy bestowed strength on the unhappy father. He raised his son, who, leaning on him, managed to totter feebly to the farm, striving to suppress the groans, caused by the sharp agony of his wound.

A voice of anguish was speedily heard by the people of the farm, shouting for help. All rushed out: they saw the miserable father coming slowly along the path, his dying son supported on his shoulder. They quickly surrounded them.

"A priest! a priest!" breathed the faint voice of Ventura.

A messenger galloped off, on the fleetest horse in the farm, to the village.

"A surgeon! a surgeon!" called out the father.

"And the officers of justice!" added the overseer.

They laid Ventura on a mattress, and staunched the blood from his wound. In this manner an hour passed, in anguish and terror. But at last the sound of galloping was heard: it was the messenger, accompanied by the priest — the succour that always arrives first, is that of religion. The priest entered, bearing the host. All prostrated themselves. The despairing Pedro found the relief of a burst of tears. They left the dying man and his confessor together. A solemn silence reigned in the farm, interrupted only by the sobs of the distracted father.

The surgeon now entered the room. He sounded the wound, said nothing, but shook his head, looking sadly at those round him. Pedro, who, with his hands convulsively clasped, was eagerly watching the face of the surgeon, fell backwards, and was conveyed out of the room.

The Alcalde and his clerk arrived at this moment, and went up to the wounded man,

whose eyes were closed; the pallor of death already overspread his features.

"Señor Alcalde," said the surgeon; "the young man can make no declaration, for he is in the agonies of death."

These words reached the ears of Ventura. With that energy which he had always possessed, he opened his eyes, and said distinctly, "Question me and I will answer."

The clerk took out his writing materials, and the Alcalde said, "What has been the cause of your death?"

"Myself!" replied Ventura, in a faint but audible voice.

"Who murdered you?"

"One whom I pardon from my heart."

"What! do you forgive your murderer?"

"Yes, from my heart! before God and man!" These were his last words.

The priest felt his pulse. "Let us pray," said he.

All knelt down, and the guardian angel, witnessing the departure of a soul, pardoning its assassin, no doubt received it mercifully, even before hearing the Divine award.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE women were all assembled at Ana's, and though no one, except Rita herself, knew the events of the previous evening, a melancholy silence reigned among them, and even the simple loquacity of Maria was at fault.

"I don't know why or wherefore," said Maria, at length, "or what is the matter with me to-day, but my heart does not seem in its right place."

"I feel the very same," replied Elvira; "I can scarcely draw my breath, and my heart seems crushed by a weight. It must be something in the air. Do you think we are going to have a storm, Aunt Maria?"

"My poor child," thought Ana, "the remedy comes too late; earth demands her body, and Heaven her soul!"

"I feel just as usual," said Rita; and indeed she was the only one who appeared to suffer from no uneasiness.

Little Angela had made a doll of rags, and placed it in a box by way of a cradle, and the dull silence that followed these words, was only broken by the child, singing in her infantine voice nursery lullabies. The child's pretty song was suddenly interrupted by the sound of the stern loud strokes of the church bell, its vibrations dying slowly away in the air, as if rising to other regions. All rose suddenly, and Ana recited aloud the prayer for the dying, about to receive the last sacraments.

"Who can it be?" said Maria; "I don't know any one in this village who is dangerously ill just now."

Rita put her head out of the window, and asked a woman who was passing, for whom the bell was tolling.

"I don't know," answered she, "but it is for no one in this village."

Another woman came up, saying, "It is for a murder; as immediately after the priest, the surgeon and the magistrate both left their houses."

"Good Heavens! May God have mercy on his soul!" exclaimed all, with that profound emotion, and feeling of horror, which the word *murder* always inspires.

"But who can it be?" said Rita.

"I have no idea, and I don't know how to find out," said the woman.

At this moment, the passing bell was tolled: a solemn, mournful sound; the voice of the Church, warning men that one of their brethren is struggling with anguish, exhaustion, and the pangs of death, and about to appear before the awful Tribunal above; a stern admonition, given by the Church to the multitude, restlessly engaged in frivolous interests, which they deem all important, and evanescent passions, which they dream are to be eternal; it says, "Pause one moment through respect to death, through consideration for your fellow creature about to disappear from the earth, as you must shortly do yourself; attend to this voice, sounding murder!—this voice, seeming to say, Mortals, *watch and pray!*"

They remained absorbed in sorrow and profound silence, but deeply moved, showing like the ocean, sometimes a calm sur-

face, yet containing within its depths profound and swelling waves. And they were not the only ones who felt thus: the whole village was in consternation, because the horror and dismay a murder inspires—the hand of man being raised thus audaciously against his fellow creature—has, ever since the anathema uttered by God against Cain, subsisted in all its solemnity, through all generations.

“How long the time seems to me!” said Maria, at last; “the day seems to have stopped altogether.”

“And the sun to stand still in the sky,” said Elvira; “can the murder have been committed by thieves?”

“It may have been accidental,” said Maria.

“Grandmother, why have they killed a man?” asked Angelita.

“Who can tell,” answered Ana, “either the cause, or the reckless hand, daring to anticipate that of God, by extinguishing the torch He lighted?”

At this instant a distant murmur was heard. The people, incited by interest and curiosity, were running along the village

street: confused exclamations of grief and horror were heard.

"Who is it?" asked Rita, approaching the window.

"They are carrying the murdered man this way," said a neighbour to Rita.

Elvira felt an irresistible impulse to look out, also.

"Come away from the window, Elvira," said her mother; "you know you cannot bear to look at a corpse!"

Elvira did not hear her, for the crowd was approaching, who actuated by friendship, kindness, and curiosity, were pressing round the dead man's bier, and those who were bearing him along. Ana and Maria also went to look out. The corpse was slung across a horse, and covered by a cloak: an old man followed, his feeble steps supported by two men, his head drooping on his breast.

They eagerly look. "Gracious God! it is Pedro."

They uttered a frightful scream.

On hearing it, Pedro raised his head, and saw Rita; rage and despair struggled in his heart, and extricating himself violently from those who were supporting him, he rushed

to the horse, and, looking up at Rita, exclaimed, "Behold your work, worthless woman! Perico murdered him!" and throwing back the cloak, the body of Ventura became visible—pale, bloody, and with a deep wound on his breast.

PART III.

CHAPTER I.

A STORMY night was covering the sky with flying clouds, that, chased by the wind, rushed on to discharge their torrents elsewhere. Sometimes, in their flight, they were torn asunder, discovering the pale and gentle moon, the herald of concord and peace, amid the gale.

During the short moments when this placid light brightened the heavens and the earth, a pale and sickly looking man was to be seen in the solitary path. His tottering gait, his gloomy eyes, and the evident tension of the muscles of his face, showed that this man was a fugitive.

Yes; he was flying! flying far from inhabited spots—flying from his fellow crea-

tures, from human justice, and from himself and his conscience, for this man was an assassin; and no one who saw him hurrying forwards with an agitated air, like the clouds above driven before the invisible strength of the blast, could have recognised in him the excellent man, the dutiful son, the loving father, and the affectionate husband he had so recently been—now a wretched being, whom the law justly doomed to expiate his crime.

Yes, this man was Perico; not seeking a peace of mind, for ever lost, but flying from the present, and in terror for the future.

He had passed days of despair, and nights of horror in the most solitary spots, with no other sustenance than roots and acorns, avoiding the eyes of men as his judges, and the light of day as his accuser; but there was no degree of obscurity capable of causing those images to fade from his mind, once so clear and bright; nor any silence that could still his agonies of remorse. He constantly thought of Ventura's bloody corpse, of the anguish of his mother, the grief of his unhappy sister, his forsaken children, the despair of his father's old friend, the reprobation of his ancient race,

and, above all, there sounded perpetually in his ears, the terrible, solemn, and funereal vibration of the passing bell, by which the Church laid claim to his victim.

In vain did pride insinuate to him through its most seductive organ, honour, that he had only done what was inevitable! that not to have done so would have been cowardly, and that the offence was even greater than the reprisal—a voice within had hushed the cry of passion; a voice more distinct and severe than all that is earthly, which must so soon fade and vanish away; the eternal voice of conscience sounded in his ears, “Oh! that I had not done it!”

A strange sound was borne on the wings of the wind, at one moment louder, at another fainter, in proportion as the gusts were more or less strong. What could it be? Everything alarms the criminal. Were they faint breathings of the wind, the sounds of a flute, or of lamentation? The nearer Perico approached, the more inexplicable it appeared. The direction in which the unfortunate man was proceeding, obliged him to go forwards. He arrived at the spot. His terror was still further increased, when,

unable to distinguish anything, owing to a dark cloud that obscured the moon, he heard this portentous sound just above his head, so vague and so sad. At this moment the clouds broke, and the white light of the moon was shed around, like a mantle of transparent snow. The mystery of darkness was dispersed, and, horror of horrors! on five posts he saw five human heads! From them proceeded those dolorous lamentations, the wind sweeping through the fleshless skulls like a warning from the dead to the living.*

Perico started back in alarm, on perceiving that he was not alone—a man was kneeling before one of the posts. This man was tall and muscular, of bold and erect bearing. He was richly dressed in the garb of a smuggler; his weather-beaten face was stern, proud, and calm. He held his sombrero in his hand, for he had bared his head before these posts of ignominy, though never doing so before the living, for this man is excommunicated by the law,

* The fact of this strange phenomenon has been attested by many, which is, however, easily explained by the wind passing through the cavities of the fleshless skulls thus exposed.

and has broken every social link, and respects no human obligations. Yet this man, though reckless, still believes in God, and, though criminal, is a Christian; and he is praying.

When from an energetic and indomitable nature like this, emancipated from all earthly bonds, a spark of religious adoration is emitted, like a gush of pure water from a dry rock, what can a sceptic say? Can he call this superstitious fear?

For this man, *fear* is a word devoid of meaning. Is it hypocrisy? No one sees him but the five dry skulls. Is it moral debility? This man has a strength of soul unknown in society, where all depend on each other; but this man depends on himself alone. Is it the memory of the time when he was a child? a holocaust to the mother who taught him to pray? The deserted orphan had never enjoyed this softening influence; he had lived only with the bold animals he had guarded. What is it, then, that causes this criminal to bend the knee, and impels him to pray before the remains of his fellow creatures? Religious feeling alone.

In the course of a few minutes, the man

had finished his prayer, he replaced his sombrero, drew his cloak once more over his shoulders, and, going up to Perico, said,

“Where are you bound for, Señor?”

Perico was totally unable to reply—a vertigo had seized his brain.

“Say where you are going, I tell you,” continued the unknown.

Perico remained silent.

“Are you dumb?” said the stranger; “or is it that you do not choose to answer? If this is the case, here are the means,” added he, pointing to his musket, “of producing words, when questions are unavailing.”

The desperate position in which Perico was placed had exasperated him to such a degree, that the power of reflection was almost dead within him, and the epithet of coward that had been launched at him, seemed to him to burn as red and fiery on his forehead, as the recent mark of a hot iron branding the criminal; thus he replied, passing on, and grasping his gun,

“A reply often depends on the tone in which the question is put.”

The intentions of the stranger were by no means hostile, nor had he any thoughts

of fulfilling his threat; not because he was afraid, for no braver man ever trod the plains and mountains of Andalusia; so far from being irritated by the arrogance of the attenuated, pale youth, it rather pleased him, and he said,

“Comrade, I always take off my sombrero before I draw my sword, but I like to know to whom I am talking, and who crosses my path. You must have good courage if you go on alone, for it is said that Diego and his band are near this, and you, as well as all Spain, know pretty well who Diego is. Where his eye is fixed, a bullet quickly follows; at sight of him the very leaves on the trees seem to tremble, and at the sound of his name the dead turn in their coffins.”

He said all this, not with that boastful Andalusian arrogance so grotesquely exaggerated in these days, but with the simplicity of conviction, and with the serenity of truth.

“What care I for Diego, or his band?” exclaimed Perico, not from any vain glorious feeling, but from the most profound indifference. Saying this, in a faint voice, he staggered back, leaning on his gun.

“What is it? what is the matter?” asked the unknown, observing his sudden faintness.

Perico did not answer, because such was his debility, and the effect of his recent agitation, that he fell senseless to the ground.

The stranger knelt down beside him, and raised his head. The moon shone full on Perico's face, handsome still, even through its mortal pallor, and the traces imprinted on it by passion, grief, and remorse.

“Is he dead?” murmured the stranger, placing his rough hand on Perico's heart—that heart which, a few days previous, had been pure as the sky of May.

“No,” continued he, “he is not dead; but he will die here like a dog, unless I assist him.”

He turned to look at him, and felt that within his heart was awakened that noble impulse which attracts strength to protect weakness, and power to shield helplessness: so that whatever the optimists may choose to say, the spark divine dwells within every heart.

He started to his feet, and whistled.

The rapid and lively gallop of a young horse was heard approaching, with tail and mane flying. When he came up to his master, he stood beside him, uttering a loud neigh, and turning his delicate head and bright eyes towards him, as if offering him the stirrup. The stranger lifted the unconscious Perico in his robust arms, placed him on the horse, jumped up beside him, gently applying his knees to the animal's sides, and the noble creature set off gallantly, and lightly, without seeming to heed the weight of his double burden.

CHAPTER II.

IN a small solitary inn, in a retired spot, near the high road, an innkeeper and his wife were quietly sitting by the fire, well accustomed to the contrast between the stirring activity of the day and the complete silence and isolation of the night; like the attacks of intermittent fever, from which the inhabitants of marshy places suffer.

“A pretty affair, truly!” said the landlady; “what business had that obstinate mariner to go and discover this new world, that he ran his head against by chance? Had not our king plenty of cares, without this additional plague? And of what use has it been?—To deprive us of our sons, and to send us a horrible epidemic home! Come, say, Andrès—and don’t sit sleeping

there like a dormouse—has it been of any other use?"

"Yes, wife," answered the innkeeper, half opening his eyes, "we have got silver from it."

"What care I for silver?"

"And tobacco," added the husband, in a slow, languid voice, going to sleep again.

"Confound all tobacco say I!" continued she, angrily. "Do you really think, you unnatural father, that either silver or tobacco are worth the lives that they cost, and the tears they cause to be shed? My darling son! Heaven alone knows what has become of him; for, in that part of the world where he is, they kill men as coolly as bugs, and the very air is poisonous!"

Her discourse was interrupted by the sound of a peculiar whistle. The landlord quickly jumped up, hastily lighted the lamp, and ran to the door, saying, "It is the Captain."

When he presented himself on the threshold, with the lamp in his hand, its red light shone on a man on horseback, carrying another before him, who seemed to be a corpse.

"Assist me in lifting down this man," said the trooper, with that asperity of voice usual in a man of few words.

The innkeeper gave the lamp to his wife to hold, who had followed him, and hastened to obey the captain's orders.

"Good Heavens! a dead man!" exclaimed the hostess. "Maria Santissima! Señor, do not bring him into our house!"

"He is not dead," replied the Captain; "but he is very ill. See that you nurse him properly, for that is the only use of women; and here is money to defray any expense."

Saying this, he gave her some gold pieces, and disappeared in the darkness, the sonorous and steady gallop of his horse dying away by degrees, like some absorbing thought which becomes fainter as the approach of sleep takes possession of our faculties.

"A pretty affair this!" groaned Marta; "he washes his own hands of the business. I am to nurse him, as if it were so easy to nurse or to cure a dead man—or at least who is very nearly so! As if this inn were a hospital! This shameful bully thinks

that all he has to do is to order people about, as if he were the King!"

"Silence!" said the terrified innkeeper; "will you hold your impudent tongue! To speak in such a way of Diego! But women are the very devil! What is the use of grumbling, when you know that we must at once do what these people tell us? Moreover, this is a work of charity, so no more about it."

They then got ready a bed in a garret, as well as they could.

"He has no marks either of blows or wounds," said Andrès, after undressing the patient. "Do you see, wife, it is an attack of illness?"

"Look, look, Andrès!" exclaimed Marta, "he wears a scapulary of our Lady of Carmen round his neck!"

As if this sight, or the holy influence of the sacred insignia, had awakened in her all the good sentiments of Christian humility, and fraternity in the same faith had caused the sacred precept to sound loudly in her heart, "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you," she exclaimed, "You are right, Andrès, it is a work of charity to assist him. Poor youth, how

young he is, and in what a miserable condition!.....His unhappy mother!.....Come, Andrès, why are you standing there bolt upright like a post? Run and fetch some wine to restore his senses, and kill a fowl that I may make him a stew."

"Just like her!" muttered Andrès, going away. "At first she would not have him in the house at all, and now, she flies into a rage. Oh! these women! the devil alone can understand them!"

Marta was indefatigable in her care of the unfortunate invalid, who, in the height of his fever, talked incessantly, disclosing terrible things.

On the night following, an ill-looking man, of repulsive aspect, entered the inn. He had been imprisoned in the Presidio (or House of Correction)—hence his nickname was "the Presidiario."

"God protect you!" said the innkeeper, on seeing him enter, but with more fear than cordiality. "What brings you here?"

"A whim of the Captain's—deuce take him! Am I not sent here to inquire after the health of a sick man, like a friar's messenger?"

"It will go very hard with him, I fear,"

said Andrès. "He is in a raging fever and quite delirious; and raving about a murder he has committed, and death's heads!"

"Hallo! what has the man done?" said the Presidiario; "let us go and have a look at him."

They went up to the garret.

"I have been in great anxiety all day about him," said the innkeeper, as they were going up stairs; "for there have been all sorts of people here, and some soldiers, and if they had heard him....."

The Presidiario, in the meantime, examined the emaciated form of the patient, and, with a depreciating gesture, said to the innkeeper—

"If he gets troublesome, give him up to justice."

"No, indeed!" exclaimed Marta, indignantly. "The unfortunate creature! I have a son in America, who may, possibly, at this very hour be like this youth, abandoned by all; and like him too, calling for his mother. No, no, Señor! neither the Holy Virgin, whose picture he wears, nor I, are capable of deserting him."

"Make as much of him as you please,"

said the Presidiario, turning to go down stairs again. "Anything new?" said he to the landlord.

"Yes; it is said that a price is to be put on Diego's head."

"What do you say?" said the Presidiario, turning round with singular and eager interest.

The innkeeper repeated what he had said. The Presidiario remained for a moment lost in thought, and then continued—

"Where is it supposed that we are?"

"Somewhere in the Despeña Perros."

"Are they hunting for us?"

"Yes; there is a troop of cavalry in Seville, one of infantry in Cordova, and one of militia at Utrera, all looking out after you."

"They will wear out a good deal of shoe-leather before they see our faces," said the Presidiario; "and if we see theirs, it shall cost them dear."

"Yes, yes! we know," replied Andrès, "that he who meets Diego face to face may bespeak his grave! Still, at last, it may happen that....."

"Would you like to know, you intolerable idiot," interrupted the Presidiario,

"the meaning of a hearty buffet from my hand?"

"Not at all," said Andrès, retreating hastily.

"Then place a better curb on your tongue. Bring me some bread and wine, and not sour."

Andrès hastened to obey his orders.

The bandit had mounted, and was just going away, when he heard Marta calling him.

"I forgot," said she; "take charge of this money; give it to the Captain, and tell him that anything I do for this young man is from pure charity, and not from interested motives."

"I'll take good care not to tell him anything of the kind," said the ruffian. "He does not suffer any one to say no, if he says give or take. But, to satisfy your conscience, I will keep the money myself." And putting spurs to his horse, he quickly disappeared.

"Pray, do you think," said the innkeeper, impatiently, to his wife, "that this ill gotten gain will be more useful in the hands of that ruffian than in our's? Oh, women!

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bad luck to them! the devil alone can understand them!"

"I understand myself, however, and the good Lord understands me, too!" said the worthy woman, returning to the bedside of the patient.

CHAPTER III.

THE attentive care of the good Marta, and the youth and strength of Perico, conquered his violent attack of fever, and at the end of fifteen days he was able to rise. Perico expressed his gratitude to Marta with the voice of the heart, more deeply felt than eloquently expressed.

"You have not so much cause to thank me," said the good woman, "as him who brought you here. I certainly did not receive you very willingly when I saw you arrive, but I took a liking for you, on seeing that you were a good Christian and a good son."

Perico hung his head, with a deep feeling of grief and shame. His state of physical debility had appeased that blind and furious rancour, which sometimes exasperates gentle

and timid natures, to such an extent, that they even exceed the limits which are respected by those of stronger, or more violent characters.

The effervescence caused by passion, like gas expelled from wine that is fermenting, was fast disappearing, leaving reflection in its stead, which, without diminishing the weight of his wrongs, loudly condemned his mode of vindicating them.

With his strength, returned all the anxiety with which his future fate inspired Perico; and this was still further augmented by the innkeeper, who, after discussing the matter with his wife, said to him one day, "My friend, now that you are recovered, it is necessary that you should try to gain your livelihood in some way. Nothing like plain speaking among friends. In your delirium you talked of a murder you had committed; if this be the case, and they find you here, we shall suffer for it, which would not be fair. The good have no right to pay for the bad, and properly regulated charity begins at home, in spite of whatever Marta may say to the contrary; for my wife is vastly pig headed, and more stupid than a pumpkin, and is capable of maintaining that charity

begins with your neighbour; and, to tell you the truth, I don't want to involve myself with justice, which has a heavy hand."

Perico did not answer, but went to take leave of Marta with tears in his eyes. The good woman felt his departure to the utmost degree, for she had taken a great fancy to him. The remembrance of her own son attracted her towards the unhappy man, and the remembrance of his mother had inspired Perico with gratitude to the worthy Marta, who had done her best for him. He took up his gun, and on leaving the house the Presidiario joined him.

"Where are you going?" said the ruffian. "Are you off without saying thank you, to the kind person who brought you here? that would be very ungrateful, comrade. What are your plans? are you in such a hurry to be sent to the galleys?" Perico neither answered, nor reflected, nor discussed, but was utterly passive. "Come along with me," continued the Presidiario; "it is better we should take care of you." Perico followed him mechanically.

"Look, Marta!" exclaimed Andr s, on seeing Perico with the Presidiario; "look

at your pet youth—a pretty jewel he is—he is gone with the Presidiario!”

“Well, and even if he has!” said Marta. “I tell you, Andrès, he is a good Christian and a good son.”

“A fool and a vagabond,” said the innkeeper, “who has eat up my poultry—and when he goes away you say he is a good man. The devil alone understands women!”

After having traversed thickets and brambles, they reached some high ground, where the Captain was standing, leaning on his musket. Eight men were lying sleeping on the brow of the hill, under his watchful care; his beautiful horse was feeding by his side, occasionally lifting up its head to look at his master.

“Here is the young man,” said the Presidiario, when they arrived.

Without making the smallest movement, the man slowly turned his eyes on Perico, and looking at him earnestly, he said, “Are you a fugitive?” Perico did not answer, but hung his head. “There is no cause for alarm,” continued his interlocutor, adding, in short, broken phrases, “there are fatal moments in the life of every man—

some as red as blood, others as black as mourning. One such hour is enough to ruin a man, and to turn his heart into a stone, that neither feels nor beats, but it weighs heavily. He remains crushed for ever, because the past can never be effaced. What is done cannot be undone—life is an affray where you must press forwards, like a brave man, and not shrink back like a coward.”

“I can never do so!” exclaimed Perico, with emotion; “if you knew.....”

The Captain extended his arm, and by an imperative sign imposed silence on Perico, saying, “Here every one keeps his own secret like a closed page, without awakening either interest or curiosity in others. If you have no place to go to, stay with us; here we can defend all that is left to us—our lives. I do not defend mine from any value I attach to it, but in order to preserve it from the hangman.”

“Then you are robbers?” said Perico.

“Something of the sort,” replied the trooper, beginning, like the tortoise, to cast his hard, rough shell.

Perico neither accepted nor rejected the

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proposal. He was an inert mass, without any will of his own; chance seemed to dispose of his miserable existence, as the wind of the desert sweeps irresistibly along its heavy, arid, sandy plains.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER the vicissitudes we have described, while Perico's miserable existence was passed in the train of a band of criminals, what has become of the other members of his family? to what extremity have despair, grief, resentment, and vengeance brought them?

Ever since the fatal day when Pedro lost his son, he had shut himself up at home with his grief. The priest, and some of his friends, went from time to time to visit him—not to console him, for this was impossible, but to converse with him about his troubles, like those who lighten a boat of the bitter waters of the sea, without being able to stop the leak, and solely to prevent its sinking. They had endeavoured to persuade him to renew his intercourse with

Perico's family, but as yet they had found this impossible.

"No," answered Pedro, on one of these occasions; "I have forgiven him before God and man, for my poor son did so before his death, but to associate with his family is more than I can bear."

"Pedro, Pedro! this is not forgiveness," said the priest; "it is the letter, not the spirit of the law."

"My revered Señor," replied the poor father, "God does not demand impossibilities!"

"No; but what I urge is quite possible."

"Señor, you wish me to be a saint, and I am not one. I have done much in forgiving Perico, like a good Christian. Have I pursued him? have I appealed to justice?—what more would you have?"

"Pedro, love your enemies; pray for them which despitefully use you."

Maria and her daughter had retired entirely within the precincts of their own house, the mother covering with the holy mantle of her love, Rita's shame and remorse, the only refuge that remained to her from universal reprobation, and the public indignation she so justly inspired.

Ana and Elvira, those two unhappy victims, remained also alone, but supported in their overwhelming grief by religion, and the testimony of a good conscience.

Thus many months passed. Then arrived in the village a mission, composed of two Capuchins. These missions have been instituted for the purpose of converting the sinful, awakening the careless, fortifying the good, and consoling the sorrowful. In this *enlightened* century, when all consider themselves sufficiently good, fervent, stable, and happy, these missions have been suppressed as superfluous.

The Capuchins preached at night, and the church was filled by people who came to hear the word of God, which teaches men to be good and pious. Now, there are *clubs* where man is taught to be free, which is thought better and more *dignified*. The good Maria contrived to persuade her daughter to accompany her to these services, and the feelings of irritable, bitter, and concentrated shame, the despairing grief of Rita, were softened into sincere repentance; tears and remorse for the past, and humiliation for the present, filled her heart; as for the future, she was to be suc-

coured by that Divine hand, that lifts up the fallen when imploring pardon, bathed in tears, and prostrate in the dust.

On one of these nights the subject of the sermon was the pardon of offences. The theme was a grand one, unequalled in holiness and sublimity. The fervent preacher knew how to expound this consoling doctrine, and his congregation how to comprehend it. At the termination of the service, the pious missionary prostrated himself before the crucifix, and with fervent zeal and ardent charity promised the God of Mercy, in the name of the people kneeling before him, that next night there should not be a single heart in the temple, closed against Divine truth, or unreconciled to God and his neighbour. A murmur of ejaculations, and the sound of sobs, confirmed the offering of the holy apostle.

The following day was a day of peace and charity, consonant to the spirit of the Gospel. The most bitter enmities were at an end, the most irreconcilable foes embraced in the streets—the angels in heaven had cause for rejoicing.

Pedro went to Ana's house. The entrance into this house was a fearful trial to

the miserable father. He went up to Ana, and embraced her in silence. The wretched mother trembled, and in vain tried to suppress her grief and agitation. But when Pedro turned to Elvira, who was dissolved in tears, looking like a spirit, and wringing her wasted hands, when he clasped in his arms her whom he had so loved and cherished as his future daughter, his stifled grief burst forth in the exclamation, "My child, my child! you and I loved him!"

Rita also went to Ana's house, to ask the forgiveness that Pedro had gone to bestow. When she was in the presence of her outraged mother-in-law, she fell on her knees, beating her breast, and crying out, "I—I alone—have been the cause of all! I do not come to ask for a pardon that I can never deserve, but to entreat you, however justly you may abhor me, not to curse me!" And when she turned to Elvira, she not only knelt, but considering even further humility necessary, she prostrated herself full length, saying, humbly, amid her sobs, "He was an angel!—forgive me, as he did." Poor Maria supported the wasted form of her guilty child in her arms, and besought

Ana's compassion by her imploring looks and tears.

Ana and Elvira rose, and without a word of reproach, kissed her who had worked such woe to both; from this day forth bestowing every care, in order to restore and comfort her, for she was the most unhappy of the three, because she was guilty.

The neighbours looked charitably on her who showed such open and sincere repentance, for though the *enlightened* world too often find in religious demonstrations only an additional motive of reproach, adding to the opprobrium of crime (which they do not forget) the stigma of *hypocrisy*, on those who call on God; the people—more generous and more just—respect public tokens of remorse and humiliation; and those who saw Rita prostrate and weeping, never failed to exchange their indignation for pity, and instead of applying the epithet, Infamous woman! they softened it into the gentler exclamation of, Poor, unhappy creature! This is because the uncultivated people do not know the meaning of *philanthropy*, but they do know, what religion so beautifully teaches, Christian charity.

CHAPTER V.

THE life that Perico led was terrible indeed to him. Impelled by necessity, and the influence exercised over him by Diego's bold, determined nature, he became involved in a criminal life by a sudden misfortune; when once, however, in its vortex, he adopted it without vacillating, as a warrior does a coat of mail. Perico followed these ruffians whom he detested, like a sombre shadow, like the silvery surface of a calm lake of fresh water, impelled by a fatal current towards the sea, in whose salt and troubled waves it is absorbed, without the power of extricating itself. Sometimes, when a crime was committed under his eyes, he thought in his despair of ending his tortures by at once giving himself up into the hands of justice; but shame deterred him, and want

of energy to execute his purpose. He was hated by his companions, who called him Perico the gloomy, but the powerful protection of Diego secured him from injury.

Diego felt himself attracted to this young man, whose life he had saved, and who was naturally good and well principled; for the rough and hard disposition of Diego had been originally lofty and noble, and he had not yet attained that greatest extent of human wickedness, to hate virtue. Without imitating the exaggerated description in romances, which make a hero of a bandit or a pirate, we hope we are equally far removed from that uncharitable Puritanism, which paints a robber as such a monster, that it does not admit the existence of a single feeling of humanity within his heart; forgetting thus, in honour of systematic morality, and calculating policy, the well known deeds of valour, generosity, and nobility of soul, performed by the chiefs of similar bands. The very fact of being selected as the chief of such a troop, proves an immense superiority; thus exercising a sway that has no support but its own strength. On one occasion, when the band in its ramblings came near the inns of

Alocaz, one of the spies whom they employed at Utrera, came running out of breath, warning them that a party of militia was marching in the direction of the inn, no doubt from the information of some travellers recently robbed. The band hastened to take refuge in a thicket of olives, but scarcely had they entered it, when they were surprised by a detachment of cavalry.

A mortal struggle ensued, in which those men who were fighting for their lives, showed great courage and intrepidity.

"Perico," said Diego to him, "now or never is the opportunity of showing that you do not eat our bread without gaining it; here, it is force against force—fight by our sides, if you are a man!"

On hearing these words, Perico, stunned, and like a person in a state of intoxication, rushed into the hottest of the fire, discharging his gun repeatedly at the unfortunate soldiers, who sacrifice everything, even their lives, solely for the benefit of society, which, in its egotism, shows no gratitude for such services, treating them like confessors, and physicians, who are neglected in health, and anxiously sought in danger. One of the bandits was killed, two soldiers

wounded, and a ball of Perico's, fired quite close, killed the commander of the party. The consternation and confusion caused by this catastrophe, enabled the robbers to disperse unmolested.

They took refuge in Utrera, passing by the properties of Chaparra, Jesus Maria, and Venagila, and arrived at night, much exhausted, at Valobrego. This valley, not far from Alcalá, is surrounded by rugged hills and olive thickets. On its isolated site, on the banks of a river, stand the ruins of a Moorish castle, called Marchenilla. At the foot of these solitary ruins, the troopers pulled up their horses, weary and exhausted. They quenched their thirst in the river, lighted a bonfire, as night had set in, and all lay down to sleep, except Diego and Perico.

"An evil day, Corso!" said Diego, caressing his noble horse, who was gracefully tossing his delicate head, as if confirming what his master said, and at the same time seeming to infer, "What matter, as I saved you?"

"I lead you a sad life, my pet," continued the robber, who dearly loved his

horse, because it was the only creature that loved him in the world.

The horse, as if he had understood him, uttered a loud neigh, gently reared, and then coming down close to his master, rubbed his head against him in order to be caressed.

"What will become of you, if they take me?" said Diego, leaning his head on the neck of his horse, who stood perfectly still. "There is no doubt," said Diego, seating himself beside the fire, opposite Perico, "that it is to you we owe having escaped so easily."

"To me?" asked Perico, surprised.

"Yes," replied the Captain; "for the party was commanded by a brave officer, one not to be trifled with, and who knew the country well—the son of the Countess de Villaoran—who would have given us no little trouble, if you had not killed him."

"Heaven preserve me!" exclaimed Perico, starting to his feet and raising his clasped hands to Heaven. "What do you say—the son of the Countess was there, and I shot him?"

"What alarms you?" answered Diego,

“did you think you were firing anise seeds? Upon my soul,” added he, impatiently, “you provoke me to death! You are just like an actor with your violent gesticulations and furious excitement—upon my faith, the Presidiario is right; instead of entering on a bold adventurous life, you ought to have become a monk. So good night, sleep sound!” said he, rolling himself in his cloak, placing his gun between his knees, and his head on a stone.

A vain injunction this for Perico! The miserable man, desperate with grief, tore his hair and cursed himself. He had killed the son of his mistress, the benefactress of his family, the playmate of his childhood!

CHAPTER VI.

How vividly, during this melancholy night, did the unhappy Perico recall the scenes of his peaceful domestic happiness, now lost for ever! And what replaced them? His present fearful position.

Nothing was moving all around, nothing was to be seen but the sad monotony of night, as gloomy as his misfortunes; a fire burning as vividly as his conscience, and a mysterious obscurity as cold and impenetrable as his future fate.

“Heavenly powers!” said he, mentally; “I remember this, I suffer this, and yet I live!”

The red and flickering light of the bonfire cast at intervals a brilliant flash in the dark, disclosing the outlines of the ruins, lighting them up for a second only

to leave them again in blacker darkness, in which they seemed to take refuge like an almost effaced memory, again consigned to oblivion.

His excited mind seemed to hear sighs in the silence, and to see horrors in the darkness. Moans accused him, mocking figures pointed at him, eyes stared at him.....yet no! it was no illusion—when the bright light, moved by the wind, blazed up, defining and realizing the objects around, Perico saw behind one of the crumbling walls, a pair of fierce black eyes fixed on him. He was so confused, and so uncertain, between the real and the supernatural, that he did not know whether to place himself under the protection of Heaven by a sign of the cross, or under that of man, by giving the alarm.

From behind the stone ruin, however, he saw emerge a human figure, bearing the impress not only of the degradation of time, but of the degradation of infamy also. It was a loathsome, old, and withered gipsy, her skinny form was clad in some tattered fragments of gray cloth, harmonizing with the tint of the ruins; her wrinkled neck was covered by a handkerchief, and

her scanty gray hair by a mantilla of black serge.

Perico stood as cold and immoveable as a statue of astonishment, or the cold, repulsive face of Medusa.

"Don't be afraid," said this strange apparition, approaching him; "there is no cause for terror, for I come for no bad purpose; you need not be uneasy. I knew that you would take refuge here, so I spread a report that you were on the way to the Sierra de Ronda, and that you had been seen near Espera and Villa Martin."

"Then what brings you here?" said Perico, instinctively shrinking from such a woman.

"To prepare you for a stroke of fortune, that will secure your independence for life," answered the gipsy.

"Any scheme of your's," answered Perico, "is not likely to be worth much."

"Because my looks are against me?" continued she; "what matter! under an old cloak there may be a jolly companion—and I come to give you a treasure, which you only require to stretch out your hands to secure."

"A treasure?" asked Perico, in whom her words, instead of awakening avarice, only gave rise to the idea that the old woman was out of her senses; "a treasure!" repeated he, "and pray where is it to be found?"

The old woman, who saw in this question a proof of what she wanted, an eager thirst for gold, came close to Perico, and, as if fearing that the breath of night might intercept her words in their transit, or an anathema disperse them in the air, she whispered in a hoarse voice, "In the church."

Perico, horrorstruck, stepped back; but in a moment he rushed up to the gipsy, and grasping her arm, he pushed her out of the enclosed ground of the ruins, uttering in a stifled voice, "Go! go!"

"I will not go," said the old woman, fearlessly, "without speaking to the Captain or to the Presidiario; see them I must and will."

In the dread of her executing her purpose, and in order to force her to go, Perico drew out a knife, which he brandished, its sharp point glittering in the light of the bonfire.

The gipsy cried out, and the robbers awoke.

"What is it?" said Diego. "How, Perico, are you going to murder a woman?"

"No! no! I don't wish to injure her," replied Perico; "I only wish her to go away."

"Simply because I have come here, despising danger and fatigue," said the old woman, "to propose to you the means of quitting for ever the miserable life you lead, of becoming rich by a single stroke, just as Rubio de Espera did, who, by a considerable robbery, was enabled to cross the seas, and to live a good life ever afterwards."

The robbers grouped themselves round her. The Presidiario offering her a fragment of the ruins for a seat.

"Do not listen to her—do not!" exclaimed Perico, eagerly; "she proposes a sacrilege."

"Señor," said the Presidiario to Diego, "tell this maudlin fellow to hold his tongue. The blind men in the street may listen—allow this woman to tell us what she has to say, and then we shall see what is to be done."

Diego hesitated, but at last turned to the gipsy. Perico then felt that all persuasion was vain, for Diego always acted on his first impulses, whether for good or evil; so, in despair, he left them, and paced up and down in the olive wood in agony of mind.

The gipsy had calculated everything, and her schemes were well laid. The great advantages, so enormously tempting, the difficulties, so easily conquered, the well-combined precautions which she so clearly pointed out, produced their effect. The temptation of offering a prize with one hand, and hidden dangers with the other, convinced some, and seduced others. All measures, therefore, being taken, they agreed as to time and signals, and before the cocks, like faithful sentinels, announced the dawn of day, the band was proceeding towards the isolated farm of Cuervo, and the old woman crawling back into her cave on the hill of Alcalá, like some cunning and venomous serpent hidden in the bosom of the earth, where she had plotted that wicked deed, among ruins and by night, tempting malefactors to further evil—a deed to be perpetrated in the very temple of God.

CHAPTER VII.

THE hours of the following day passed slowly for the idle occupants of Cuervo. All the remonstrances and entreaties of Perico, and his endeavours to dissuade Diego from his sacrilegious purpose, had been vain. Diego never knew what it was to draw back from a design, and this tenacious obstinacy in pursuing the path of evil had cost him honour and self-respect, and was doomed to cost him life and liberty. Indeed, he did worse, for, at the instigation of the Presidiario, Diego forced Perico (who had determined finally to leave the band) to accompany them on this atrocious enterprise; because, according to the ideas of this villain, it was the only means of preventing Perico turning *informer*.

At last, the earth turned his shoulder on the sun, covering it with his black mantle.

They all mounted, and towards midnight arrived at the ruined castle of Alcalá. Diego whistled three times. At the same instant, from one of the open dungeons beneath the castle, the gipsy appeared, with a dark lantern in her hand.

They all dismounted, and followed her.

Perico went on in anguish of mind, suspecting the strait in which he was in, and that he would not be permitted to leave the band; indeed, his comrades quickly surrounded him, and compelled him also to follow the gipsy.

She, after greeting the robbers humbly, and talking to them in her strange jargon, forced open with a picklock the door of a small yard, filled with timber and rubbish, where a door led to the sacristy, through which these sacrilegious villains made good their entrance, not without fear, and startled almost by the sound of their own footsteps.

What a sublime and awe inspiring spectacle does a silent and deserted church offer at the dead hour of night! Even the most pure and pious souls are overwhelmed by

such a scene, and sink into profound and holy meditations; and no scepticism avails in hardening the heart that dares to realize it. How immense, and appalling, seems that gloomy nave! how lofty those arches, supported by gigantic stone pillars, and losing themselves in the mysterious obscurity of a sky without stars! In an adjacent dark chapel, lies a chill, torpid statue reposing on a tomb, and although its outlines are scarcely visible, the very obscurity seems to impart movement to its lifeless limbs. The high altar is still fragrant with the incense and flowers offered up in the morning, and the light burning there emits faint sparks in the darkness; the altar, that universal centre of faith, that throne of charity, that refuge of hope, that lavish source of gentle consolations, that refuge of the destitute, attracting all eyes, all steps, and all hearts. Before the tabernacle burns the solitary lamp, guardian of the Sacred Host, with no other mission than to shine, because light is the conception of God; holy and mysterious lamp, gentle and perpetual holocaust, everlasting flame, type of eternal mercy, ardent as love, silent as awe, joyous and peaceful as hope! The

sparkling and reflection of this light, delineate and illuminate some salient points of the ornaments and foliage in the gilding above the altar, giving them the fantastic appearance of eyes, watching with religious vigilance. Here nothing distracts the mind; this complete immoveability, this unbroken silence, form a suspension of life, which is neither death, nor sleep, partaking of the solemnity of the one, and the peace of the other.

Such was the aspect of the church of Alcalá when the robbers entered, lighted by the lantern of the loathsome gipsy, and dragging with them by force the unhappy Perico.

"Unbind him, and lock the door," said Diego.

"He will shout for help, and thus betray us," said the others.

"Unloose him, I say," replied the Captain. "Who could hear him? What could he do?"

"He could call out," argued Leon, who, assisted by the gipsy, was despoiling the high altar of the superb silver ornaments which adorned it.

"Then watch him closely," replied the Captain.

Two of their number, no doubt less reckless, and unwilling to lay their hands on sacred things, went up to Perico, who, like all those who have usually much self-command, impetuous and uncontrollable when he gave way to his feelings, now suddenly recovering his energy, called out,

"Take off your sombreros, villains; you are in the house of God!"

"Quick! a gag!" exclaimed the Captain, furiously.

And instantly they fastened a handkerchief, so as effectually to prevent his uttering a syllable, all resistance being useless; but, in spite of the gag half-suffocating him, when he saw the gipsy and Leon breaking open the door of the Host, Pedro made a desperate effort, and, falling on his knees, shouted, "S  crilege! sacrilege!" an appalling sound, which penetrated into the small chapels, resounding among the arches, as thunder does among the clouds, and awakening the vibrations of the grand, sonorous organ, that alone enjoys the privilege of accompanying the sublime "De

Profundis," and the glorious "Te Deum," dying away in its metal pipes, like groans of agony. These wretched robbers were frozen for a moment with horror; even Diego trembled; but, with the speed of lightning, he rushed furiously on Perico, dashed him against the marble pavement, cursing and spurning him with his foot, and calling out to the others to dash his brains out with the butt end of their muskets, if he uttered a word. The unhappy man, lying on the ground, and beaten by the bandits, could only groan forth,

"Mercy! mercy!"

"Murder him, if he breathes a syllable!" repeated Diego. "and let us finish our work here quickly, for the night is becoming brighter, and we might be seen leaving the church."

The clouds were indeed fast breaking, and a ray of moonlight at this moment entered through an old stained glass window of the church, kissing the foot of an image of the Conception.

"Cursed moon!" exclaimed the gipsy, adding other horrible imprecations. All were so terrified at sight of each other, by this sudden and unexpected ray of moon-

light, that they hurriedly completed their sacrilege, and collected their spoils.

They went out as they had come in, and when the gipsy saw them depart on horse-back loaded with their riches, she also set off once more to burrow in her hole in the castle.

The rays of the sun had not yet gilded the Giralda, when the troop of robbers, laden with their booty, arrived in the vicinity of Seville. They left their horses in an olive plantation, under the care of the Presidiario, and entered the city, each by a different gate, agreeing to meet in a retired place appointed by the gipsy, where a silver-smith was to receive, weigh, and pay for, the silver ornaments. When the robbers, however, returned to the spot, where they had left the Presidiario with their horses, he was nowhere to be seen.

"The dog has sold us," said one.

"But for what purpose?" said Diego; "his share of the booty is worth more to him than what he would get for betraying us."

"He must have seen suspicious people about, and taken refuge in Cuervo," said Perico.

They walked towards the farm, avoiding high roads and frequented paths, by traversing the olive plantation.

But still they saw nothing of the Presidiario.

"Ah, my poor Corso!" said Diego, while a tear, like liquid steel, glittered for a moment in his eyes; but, recovering his self-possession, he said, "we are sold, no doubt; let us be off instantly, each for himself, down by the river, along the coast of the Rey, to Ayamonte and Portugal. I shall catch him some day, and on that day it would have been better for him never to have been born."

They were on the point of setting out, when the gipsy joined them, to receive her share of the spoils. All assailed her with questions as to the disappearance of the Presidiario, but she could tell them nothing, and seemed very uneasy.

"You are no longer safe here," said she, "and you ought to get away as soon as possible. The eldest son of the Countess de Villaoran has sworn to revenge the death of his brother. He has got a troop from the Commander-in-Chief, and is now pursuing you. I fear he may have sur-

prised the Presidiario; as for me, the ground seems to burn under my feet."

"May it swallow you up!" said one.

"May you die the death!" said another.

The old woman glided away silently among the olives, like a viper, after having left its venom in the wound it had made.

"We plundered the house of God," said one.

"We despoiled the sanctuary," said another.

"Be silent," exclaimed Diego; "why allude to the past? What is done cannot be undone. Let us go."

But at this moment the sounds of horses' hoofs were heard, and Perico, who had been placed by Diego as sentinel, came running to announce that the Presidiario was close at hand, with the horses. A general exclamation of joy welcomed the Presidiario, who related that having descried a troop of soldiers, he had been forced to hide, and could only return by making a long circuit.

"But now," he added, "do not let us lose time; we are pursued. Captain, lay hold of Corso; I have taken good care of him, knowing it would please you."

Diego caressed the noble animal, full of

joy at seeing him once more, and vowing mentally never more to separate from him.

They hurried forwards, but on entering a defile, suddenly the formidable cry was heard, "Yield to the King!"

It was the troop of cavalry who had been in search of them; two of them had rushed up to Diego, pointing their pistols close to his heart, while two more seized his horse by the bridle. Diego turned his head, and looked behind him with unruffled calmness, knowing the powers of his good horse, whom he had purposely trained for such emergencies. With the rapidity of lightning he drew out his dagger, cut the bridle reins of the horse, and digging his heels into Corso's sides, he leant forwards on his neck, shouting, "Come along, Corso! save your master!"

The noble and intelligent animal reared convulsively, then fell back on its hind quarters, making vain efforts to rise—he was ham-strung!

Diego knew the stroke, and the hand that dealt it. Frantic with rage, he jumped to the ground, but the wretch had disappeared among the soldiers who were crowd-

ing the defile. They seized Diego, who offered no resistance.

On quitting this narrow pass, Diego turned his head and cast a last lingering look at his horse, who, though unable to move, still followed his master sadly with his large eyes. None but a man with the rude energy and strong will of Diego, could have concealed under a calm bearing that defied all inquisitive eyes, the fury that raged within his breast, and the grief that rent his heart.

The soldiers disarmed the freebooters, and tied their hands behind their backs.

"Which is the man," asked the Count de Villauran, on seeing them assembled, "who murdered my brother?"

The robbers were silent, owing to a glance from Diego, who, though a prisoner and in manacles, still inspired them with awe.

"Who was it?" continued the Count, his voice hoarse from rage.

"It was I!" said Perico.

The Count turned to the miserable looking young man, whom he had not yet particularly remarked, but when he fixed

his eyes on him he uttered a cry of horror. "You!" exclaimed he; "Perico Alvareda! Oh! unheard of iniquity! unexampled perversity! Poor Ana, the wretched mother who gave you birth! your unhappy children, disgraced for ever! miserable Elvira! Know, depraved creature," continued the Count, vehemently, "that your sister and your wife have toiled, with incessant zeal, to obtain your pardon; they were incessantly at the feet of the tribunals, and the judges. Ventura pardoned you before his death, and Pedro has likewise forgiven you. My unfortunate brother was the eager and unwearied agent of your family, and at length succeeded in procuring your pardon from the King. All were seeking you with the utmost anxiety, and my brother most of all. He found you at last! Oh! that he had never met you!"

Diego, who had observed the overwhelming grief depicted on the distorted features of Perico, whose face bore the cold, livid, hue of death, on seeing him stagger backwards, said to the Count,

"Señor, do you not see that you are killing him?"

"I will not anticipate the public execu-

tioner," answered the Count, mounting his horse. "To Seville!"

"Courage!" whispered Diego to Perico; "we are all doomed men, and yet you see we are all calm."

They entered Seville amid the maledictions of the populace, horror struck by their recent crimes. But public indignation was even greater, on seeing, free and unfettered, the infamous traitor who had sold them. This was the vile Presidiario, who, in this manner, bought his pardon, and obtained the premium offered for Diego's head, the famous bandit who had so long set at defiance the pursuit of the law.

The Presidiario was obliged to fly and hide himself, to escape from the insults of which he was the object. At night fall, he knocked at the door of a low inn, in the suburb of Macarena, but scarcely was he recognized by the master, than he said,

"Do me the favour to go back whence you came."

"What is this?" said the Presidiario; "since when do you receive your friends in this rude fashion?"

"I tell you so for your own good," answered the man; "for if our lads find you

here, I would not like to be in your skin. Follow my advice and take the road again, and that speedily, without turning your head."

"What stuff you talk! why these very men are more wicked than I am, and would be glad to sell their own fathers for a real!"

"I dare say they would—they are bad enough; but I don't wish to have an affray in my house. Get along! every road leads to Rome," said he, pushing the Presidiario out of the house, the door of which he closed, adding, "Mary Magdalene be your safe guard, who guides the penitent."

"And you shall repent, miserable coward!" said a voice which appeared to issue out of the darkness.

On the following morning, the corpse of a man who had been stabbed through the heart, was found outside the burying ground. It was that of the traitor—the Presidiario.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE jail of Seville was, at that period, badly situated in a narrow street, in the most central part of the city. It was a building of evil aspect, mean, gloomy, devoid of the severity of legal authority, and of the dignity which humanity owes to misfortune, and even to guilt.

A few paces from this horrible focus of coarse iniquity, and cynical degradation, the street opened into the great square of San Francisco, which was irregular, but spacious: these edifices form a considerable portion of the property of the notable corporation of Andalucia. To the right, the principal houses rear their heads ostentatiously, their rare architecture being considered, both by the inhabitants and by strangers, as the choicest gems of the

jewels in Seville, which, however, has not prevented a proposal having been twice made, in these days, to pull them down, by the *vandals of progress*, whom we regard as more destructive than those of the barbarous ages.

To the left, forming a prominent angle, the regular and severe structure of the Audiencia presents itself. To this tribunal justice delegates her entire powers; its clock, like a star of clemency, is always kept ten minutes slow; an illegal measure, which, however, we respect, for these ten additional minutes of life are granted to the criminal, before striking the cruel hour of his extermination. How touchingly all the ancient laws and customs of Spain bear the stamp of love and charity; ten minutes are nothing for him who is passing tranquilly along the path of life, but they are a vast boon for one who is about to die! Ten minutes on the threshold of death, may decide a man's fate for all eternity; ten minutes might bring the arrival of an unexpected, but possible pardon. But, even if these spiritual and temporal considerations did not exist, still this merciful subterfuge of our ancestors, at all events,

conceded ten minutes more of life to the man about to die, and this lenity proves that even in its most severe sentences, Catholic judges knew how to impress the seal of charity on their judgments. Oh, Spain! what examples you have given to the world, on all points—you, who now follow those of strangers!

On one side of this building, forming an opposite angle, stands the convent of San Francesco, with its spacious diameter and its superb Church. The other parts of the square are adorned by porticos, which, with their ancient festoons of stone, ornament the various buildings.

On the opposite side from that we have described, is a large marble fountain, the waters of which are as constant and durable in their flow, as the recipient in its material.

The square of San Francesco and its adjacent streets were on this day crowded by an unusual concourse of people. What was the cause of their assembling? what was their object? To see a man die! But no! not to see him *die*, but to see a fellow creature *murdered*! To die! Death is solemn, but not terrible, when the Angel

of Death gently closes the already dim and failing eyes of the creature, thus giving wings to the soul to enable it to soar to other regions. But to see a human being *put to death* by the hand of his fellow man, in dismay of spirit, in agony of soul, in tortures of suffering, this is terrific indeed! The crowd are hurrying forwards, trampling on each other in their eagerness to get places close to this legalized murder! But it is neither pleasure nor curiosity, which attracts hither this impetuous multitude; it is that fatal thirst for stimulating excitement, which exists in the contradictory human heart; such emotions are legible on the pallid and anxious faces of the crowd.

A low murmur ran through the dense throng, in the midst of which rose the great skeleton—this pillar of shame and of agony, this usurper of the mission of death, this spot deserted by all but the priesthood—the fearful scaffold! constructed at night, by the dim light of lanterns, because the men who erect it are ashamed that the sun of God, or their fellow creatures, should look on them.

This great throng felt a thrill of horror

on hearing at intervals the mournful bell of San Francisco tolling for a departing life, that now existed only for God, for the world had already blotted him out of the list of the living! It tolled with profound and solemn sadness, alternately raising its voice to God in supplication, commending a soul to His mercy, and descending again to earth, as a grave and deliberate warning to mortals; this gloomy solemnity, inhaled like the air, oppressed the soul, and seemed to say, "Die, culprit! die as an expiatory sacrifice for sinful and degraded humanity!"

The fountain alone, pure and limpid, tranquilly continued in its clear voice, its gentle and monotonous song, as far removed as childhood and innocence from the horrors of this earth. Oh, innocence! emanation from Paradise, still breathed in our corrupt atmosphere by children, and those privileged beings, who, like Faith, place a bandage over their eyes, in order to believe without seeing, and another on their hearts to see, and not to comprehend; who, like Charity, hold their hearts in their hands; and, like Hope, fix their eyes on Heaven, may you always meet with that love and

admiration which, as daughters of Heaven, you deserve!

There are two classes of charity—the one is that which alleviates material suffering, materially, by money: this is good and generous, but easy, and a social obligation. The other alleviates moral anguish, morally: this kind of charity is sublime and divine. It is not, however, much celebrated in the world, which seizes so many occasions to censure and so few to praise the beauty of charity. And who compose this admirable Brotherhood? Is it, by any chance, those who waste so much paper and phraseology in favour of humanity, philanthropy, and fraternity? No; none such condescend to enter into this vast body, which is, for the most part, composed of the aristocracy of the towns and villages where it is established. And why is this?—Because between theory and practice, as between words and deeds, there is a great gap.

If you had gone along the streets of Seville, just before the period referred to in the last chapter, you would have seen the principal personages of the city going from house to house with a bag in their hands, repeating, in a grave voice, this phrase:

"For the miserable men who are about to be executed!"

Now, independent of all merit, and of the sincerity and humanity of these men, and ignoring, if it were possible, the benefits and advantages of this good work of charity, both in him who gives and him who receives, let us look at the fact denuded of all these accessories. Is it not, in itself, a grand and magnificent example to the people? A practical lesson, of more value than those poisonous writings, that excite and inflame evil passions for the profit of others?

Diego and his band, in the chapel of the jail, were visited alternately, but unremittingly, by Christian brothers; who, leaving their houses, their comforts, and luxuries, came to share in this prolonged agony, alleviating the last moments of these unhappy beings; anticipating their desires, no longer those of the wicked: and shedding balm on the wounds inflicted by the sword of justice.

The Condé de Cantillana and the Marquès de Greñina, two of the most zealous and devoted members of this holy fraternity, had gone to the tribunal which holds its

sittings in the prison, while the criminals are being conducted to the scaffold and during the execution of the condemned, to solicit the bodies of these unfortunate men. The following is the form adopted by this grand and touching Catholic institution :

“ We come in the name of Joseph and of Nicodemus, to ask permission to take down the corpse from the scaffold.”

The judge grants the request, and the supplicants withdraw.

Each criminal has his confessor by his side, a holy staff, by which the steps passing to the scaffold are steadied.

When Perico had finished his sacramental confession, he said to the venerable monk, who was aiding him in this last extremity, “ My name is not known ; I have been only designated by my comrades as Perico the Gloomy. But, as between Heaven and earth, nothing remains hidden, sooner or later my family must know my fate. Father ! have the charity to accomplish my last desire. I wish you to be the person to reveal the tidings to my mother. Tell her that I died penitent and contrite, and not quite so guilty as I appear. Evil is a precipice, down which the weight of your first

crime mercilessly drags you ; and this crime, which has weighed, and still weighs, so heavily on my conscience, I committed, because I preferred the vain thing that men call honour, too often bought with blood, to the precepts of the Gospel, which enjoin longsuffering as a virtue and pardon as a duty. Oh, father ! how differently do the things of this life appear on the threshold of death ! Tell my dear sister, whose betrothed I murdered, that I commend her to an Immortal Spouse, who will never deceive nor forsake her. To Uncle Pedro say, that I know he has pardoned me, as his son also did ; and that I take with me this consolation from the world, and fervently thank God for such mercy. Say to Rita, that I lived and died, my heart filled with love and compassion towards her ; and that if I had survived, I never would have reminded her of the past, knowing her sincere repentance. My mother-in-law will, I know, with her usual kind heart, pray for me to the Almighty. As for my poor children—my orphans—may they never know, if possible, their father's fate ; and bless them, and pray.....”

Here the anguish of his heart burst forth in sobs.

The good priest, listening to him, was persuaded of Perico's innocence of heart; and of his having evidently been dragged into crime, while exasperated and blinded with fury, by all that could enrage a husband, a brother, and a brave man; and involved in a life of outlawry, by the force of circumstances, by fatal necessity, and want of energy; perceiving all this, the good Father suffered the misery of him who sees a vessel shipwrecked at his feet, without the power or possible means of saving it.

The continued and active exertions made by Rita to discover the hiding place of her husband, whose pardon she had obtained from the King, through the medium of kind friends, chanced to bring her on this very day, along with her mother, to Seville.

On attempting to cross the square of San Francesco, they found a vast throng crowded together in it. The two women asked the cause of this tumult, and the gallows was pointed out to them. They tried to turn back, but the people crowded round them, and prevented their being able to move. The culprit now came in sight, and all

broke out into exclamations of pity. "How young he is!" said they. "What an humble and suitable demeanour. Poor fellow! He is surnamed Perico the Gloomy. They say it was his wife—a wicked, light woman—who caused his ruin."

Rita's heart beat violently. The culprit passed close by her. She saw him!—she knew him! A scream, unequalled in agony, rent the air, and resounded through the square.

Perico stopped. "Father!" said he, "it is she—it is Rita!"

"My son," replied the Father, "think of God alone, in whose presence you are about to appear, contrite, reconciled, and blessed, having finished your expiation."

"Father, I should like at least to see her once more before I die!"

"My son, think of the severe punishment that you are about to receive from the hand of man, representing for you the hand of destiny, and the subsequent glorious brightness."

Perico, however, anxiously looked round.

"Forwards!" said the sergeant.

They reached the scaffold, and Perico prostrated himself before his spiritual father,

who gave him his benediction with calmness and fervour. The poor culprit kissed with ardour and solemnity the crucifix—this other scaffold, where the Son of God expiated the crimes of man. Perico once more turned his eyes to the spot whence the cry had issued that rent his heart. Placed on the seat, the garotte is fastened round his throat; the executioner stands behind, and the priest intones the Credo; the executioner turns the screw, and a unanimous groan is heard in the square.

“Holy and blessed Jesus!” With this solemn invocation, the mortal existence of the culprit is snapped asunder by the hand of the executioner, who hastens to cover the head with a black cloth.

Profound silence reigns in the square; over which death, like the cloth of the executioner, extends its black wings.

Rita, having sunk down in a fit, was succoured by some compassionate persons, who conveyed her to an inn. Her state was terrific. The convulsions that attacked her left her few moments of consciousness; but, during these intervals, her desperation was so great, that it was found necessary to restrain her as a lunatic. For several

days it was impossible to transport her to her own house. At last her relations brought a cart to carry her home. They extended the unhappy woman on a mattress, placed in the waggon, but no one would accompany her, from a sense of shame. Maria alone was with her daughter, supporting in her lap the head of her child, whose long black hair streamed down, almost entirely covering her, as if to conceal her from all curious or indiscreet eyes.

"There goes the wife of the man who was garotted," said those who saw her passing along the street; "by her levity and misconduct, she caused his death." And the oxen did not hasten their slow steps, as if they, too, considered it their duty to inflict the stigma of reprobation on her who had confronted crime with such audacity.

Her unfortunate mother, Maria, looked like a resigned martyr. Her gentle temperament imparted such elasticity to her soul, that it enabled her to embrace the extent of her suffering without her heart breaking. Rita, at intervals, trembled convulsively, burst into tears and groans, and

pressed closer to her mother, who said not a word; for what consolation could be found for grief like this!

They arrived at the village towards night. The cart stopped before Rita's house, and they carried her in. One of the windows in her mother-in-law's house was partly open. Through this window an unusual light was seen. Rita extricated herself from the arms of those who were supporting her, and rushed to the grating of the window.

In the middle of the room, which she had inhabited in happier days, stands a coffin. Four large wax candles shed their grave and solemn lustre on the serene corpse of Elvira. She is as white as a lily, her hands crossed on her breast, and laid across her right arm reposes a branch of palm, the symbol consecrated to virginity. Thus lay Elvira, the beloved of all in the village, calmly, and in the attitude of prayer. The heart recoils from the modern ideas of embellishing the dead. What object can there be in despoiling death of its august majesty, daubing with red its imposing pallor, uncrossing the hands previously devoutly united—the sign of imploring Divine mercy

—covering the cold, inert limbs with festive garments, and placing in the chilled and motionless hands bunches of coloured flowers, the symbols of joy and mirth? Does death appear so light, or so joyous a thing, that we ought to prefer adorning the body, food for worms, to praying fervently for the soul which is eternal?

On the walls of this deserted room, the herbs the children had placed there at Christmas, were still hanging, dry and withered. At the foot of the coffin was seated Ana, like a second corpse, pale and motionless.

On one side of her Pedro was standing, and on the other the priest, who had accompanied Perico to the scaffold.

EPILOGUE.

YEARS after the events we have related, the Marquis of — went to pass a few days on an estate of his at Dos Hermanas.

One evening, returning late from the house of a relation, in passing an olive tree he observed that the guard and the bailiff, who accompanied him, took off their sombreros. He looked, and saw a red cross nailed on the tree.

"Has there ever been a murder in such a peaceful spot as this?" asked he.

"Yes, Señor," replied the guard, "the bravest and handsomest youth of our village was murdered here; Dos Hermanas will never see his like again!"

"And the murderer," added the bailiff, "was the most respected and excellent man in all the country."

"How did it occur?" asked the Marquis.

"Señor," said the guard, "wine and women—the cause of all evil."

And while they pursued their way, the men repeated the events that we have narrated, with all their circumstances and details.

"Do any of the family still live in the village?" asked the Marquis, deeply interested in the sad history he had just heard.

"No, Señor!" was the reply. "Pedro died within the year. The wife of Perico prayed for death, but the priest who attended her husband on the scaffold persuaded her to strive to live, for the sake of her children, saying, that such was the will of God, and her husband; but she must have had a heart of steel to remain here, where all knew and lamented her husband; so she went with her mother to reside in the Sierra, where they had some relations. A neighbour, who saw her there lately, said that she is sadly changed. Constant tears have worn furrows in her cheeks, and she is as sharp and thin as the scythe of death itself, and her health very infirm."

"And Perico's mother?" asked the Marquis.

"Poor Ana died only the day before yesterday. The excellent woman looked like a shadow, bent double, and anticipating her descent into the grave as a bed of rest."

They had now arrived in the village, and as they passed a large dark house, the bailiff said,

"This is her house."

The Marquis stopped, and entered.

An old woman, a relation of the deceased, alone inhabited this sad and deserted house, on which, at this moment, the tender white light of the moon was lying like a shroud.

"I see that all the flower borders are choked with weeds," said the Marquis.

"It was not so," answered the old woman, "when they were under the care of the poor girl, who, on the day that she heard of her brother having been executed, closed her eyes for ever, to open them no more on the horrors of earth; she had these borders filled with bright flowers, that flourished like daughters under the tender care of a mother."

"Oh, what a sad pity!" exclaimed the Marquis, "this superb orange tree is dead."

"Yes, Señor, people say it had seen cen-

turies pass away," said the old woman; "and it was once much cherished and cared for, but after poor Ana lost her children, neither she nor any one else took any charge of it, so it withered and died."

"Whose dog is that?" asked the Marquis, observing an old blind dog lying in the corner.

"Poor Melampo! Since he lost his master, he would not stir out, and began to mope sadly, and shortly after went blind. Ana, on her deathbed, begged me to take care of him—it was the only request the poor thing made; but it will be unnecessary, for when the corpse was carried out he howled fearfully, and has refused to eat ever since."

The Marquis went up to the animal.

The dog was dead.

neglected sombre house, bewildered in exterior, and shut up; the aspect of which produced an equally disagreeable effect on the eye and on the mind. The two contiguous houses were as white as alabaster, and their newly painted railings and balconies displaying a tint of green as fresh as that of the plants grouped on them in their coral coloured vases. In this collection of flowers, the vain dahlias, embellished by European culture, reared their gorgeous heads; and mignonette, as distinguished among flowers, as a person in society, who combines modesty with true merit. The heliotrope, conscious of its value, and therefore disdaining bright colours, took refuge behind the geraniums, which, by the variety and beauty of their exterior, have conquered a distinguished place among the floral aristocracy. In this most favoured spot, camellias met the eye: cold, stiff, without fragrance (the very soul of flowers), self-important, setting the fashion; forgetting that the same caprice and novelty, which elevate them to-day, may abase them to-morrow, and that they will the more quickly pass into oblivion, from not even leaving a sweet perfume to embalm their

memory. Some exquisite carnations, these most Spanish of all flowers, as tall as the balcony, were drooping their pretty heads, as if from the excess of their aroma. Behind the windows were Chinese blinds, made of green rushes, on which singular birds and apocryphal flowers were painted, seeming to emanate from the rainbow, causing the houses to resemble a large fantastic aviary, in an enchanted garden. The deserted house, in strong contrast with its sombre walls, its rusty railings, and its closed shutters, shunning the light of day and the eye of man, appeared excluded from joyous active life, and to bear a curse on its walls. Nothing was to be seen on the balcony but the fragments of a written advertisement, damaged by the wind and the rain, and which the landlord, tired of renewing, had left in the same tattered state; its deserted aspect seeming to sanction the interdiction of this forsaken mansion.

In short, the silent and funereal house, enclosed between its two gay and handsome neighbours, might be compared to a death's head between two vases of flowers.

II.—A CONVERSATION.

IN one of these houses, a courteous and charming lady was receiving a number of visitors, to celebrate her *fête* day. Addressing herself to one of the gentlemen forming part of her circle, she said,

“So you have not yet found a house?”

“No, madam,” said the gentleman, who was a stranger; “some that have been proposed to me are too small for my large family; others not well situated; and my wife, who seldom goes out, charged me above all things, to secure a house in a good situation.”

“This neighbourhood certainly does not increase,” said one of those present; “there are no houses to be had.”

“But,” said the stranger, “I perceive that there is one to be let next to your’s; it would exactly suit me I think, and you have not mentioned it.”

“True,” answered the lady; “it seems an oversight on my part, but we are so accustomed to consider that house as one of the dead, that you must not be surprised

it did not occur to me to divest it of its shroud."

"As one of the dead? Do you mean, as what no longer exists?" asked the stranger, in a tone of surprize.

"Precisely so; for no one occupies it, or wishes to restore it to life."

"And pray why? Is it in ruins?"

"By no means; it is in excellent condition."

"Is it cold, or damp?"

"No; it is in good order, and commodious."

"Did any one die of consumption in it?"

"Not that I know of; besides, those exaggerated fears with regard to consumption, which certainly arose from prejudice, are now beginning to disappear among us. When a person suffering from this malady dies, the walls of the house are white-washed, the woodwork freshly painted, which, in fact, ought to be done after a severe illness of any kind, and thus such houses now become habitable, as soon as the victims of this terrible scourge cease to exist—a malady which a sea voyage alone is supposed to have the exclusive privilege of curing."

"Then what can be the reason that the house in question remains unoccupied? is there a ghost, or anything very dreadful, within its walls?"

"There is, indeed," replied the lady.

"You tell me that in the nineteenth century, in the midst of all these bright lights, and in the face of the prevailing scepticism of the day?"

"Yes; because this prejudice arises from a crime, which neither enlightenment nor philosophy can dissipate. In this very house a foul murder was committed."

"I can quite understand," said the stranger, "that such an event must have been a fearful thing for those who at that time inhabited the house, and terrible for the relations; but it does not appear to me a sufficient reason, why after the lapse of time, the house should either be condemned to be demolished, or continue to exist without being inhabited. When was the crime committed?"

"Six years ago."

"It seems to me that the desertion of this mansion, innocent of the misdeed of which it was the theatre, is both a singular fact and a strange anomaly at the present

period, when unless, under very exceptional circumstances, utility and profit alone are the incentives of all actions."

"I do not attempt to deny our weakness," said the lady; "we are certainly rather old-fashioned in this respect, and, moreover, we do not regret it; but the horror of this assassination, the innocence of the victim, who was a poor inoffensive old lady, the mystery which shrouded its author, and which will most probably never be dispersed, all this has inspired peculiar horror of the spot on which the crime was accomplished. This aversion, sanctioned by time, is at present so great, that no one has hitherto been found bold enough to disturb the state of isolation that weighs on the spot like a malediction. Its solitude is like a seal on a closed letter. God will one day unclothe it, if not before a human tribunal, at all events before that Supreme Tribunal of which He is the sole Judge."

At this moment fresh visitors arrived, and the conversation was consequently interrupted.

III.—A CRIME.

THE curiosity of the stranger, excited by what he had heard, induced him to return in the course of a few days, with the intention of renewing the conversation. After the first compliments, he said to the amiable lady of the house—

“You may perhaps be surprised, madam, at my persistence, but I have the greatest desire to hear some details of the crime you mentioned to me a few days since, which must have been appalling indeed, since even Time, that Saturn which engulphs the very stones, has not swept away its traces.”

“I will gladly tell you all I know on the subject,” said the lady, “which is indeed only what every one knows, but very possibly the occurrence being so distant in date, may be deprived in your eyes of the gloomy and sinister aspect in which it was regarded by all the inhabitants of this city. Ten years ago a Commandant, his wife, and three little children, and his mother-in-law, arrived in this town, and took up their abode in the house of which we have been

speaking. In appearance, as well as conduct, the Commandant was a perfect gentleman. With the affection he showed to his wife, who was young and very simple, was mingled a certain degree of paternal gravity, and they appeared to be a most united and happy family. She was a dove without gall, as the saying is, and she was as proud and happy at having been the choice of her excellent husband, as of being the mother of the three little angels who constantly surrounded her. She was the type of those exemplary women, who only exist within the narrow circle of their home duties as wives, mothers, and daughters. As for the old lady, she was among the number of those whom the world, as the readiest mode of classification, denominate a 'good creature.' She was very pious, and passed great part of her time in church, praying to God for the objects of her affection, and occupied at home in praising and caressing them.

"These two ladies possessed some property in a small village, and on this account they were called here *rustics*; for my part, I always saw in this family the most perfect politeness, pleasing frankness, and

strict morality, without hypocrisy, or any pretensions to the praise of others. If this is being *rustic*, there is no cause to regret being so. I often visited them, for their domestic peace, and calm and tranquil felicity, communicated their charm to my own heart; a pleasing sympathy attracting me towards a man so excellent, and so strict in the performance of all his duties. I was equally impelled towards the gentle wife, whose enjoyments were centered in her virtues, as those of others are in their pleasures, and towards the old, simple, loving grandmother, whose only occupation in life was to love and to pray. This state of felicity, though homely and modest, was nevertheless too perfect to be durable, in a world where unfortunately even the good and excellent cease to remember heaven, when they enjoy too agreeable an existence on earth—so one morning, my maid entered my room in considerable agitation. She had an expression of horror in her face, and was panting for breath. ‘What is the matter, Manuela?’ asked I in alarm.—‘A dreadful misfortune—an unexampled atrocity.’—‘What do you mean? what has happened? explain yourself.’—‘This last

night—in the house next door—don't be frightened.'—'No, no; only finish your story.'—'The old lady has been murdered!'—'Murdered? what do you say?'—'Yes! murdered, assassinated with a knife.'—'Holy Virgin!' cried I, horrorstruck, 'and how? did robbers get in?'—'We suppose so, but nothing is positively known.'—The fact is," continued the lady, "that in the morning, the servant who slept in a room beyond the entrance hall, left the house to go to market. He declared that the outer door was closed, just as he had left it on the previous night. It was evident, therefore, that the assassins had not made their way in by the court, but when he returned from market, he was quite surprised to find the outer door ajar, so that it yielded to his pressure, and he entered the house, without its being necessary to ring for some one to let him in. What was his astonishment to see the water in the white marble basin of the fountain in the court, tinged with red! his terror increased, when on the white wall of the stair he perceived the bloody marks of an open hand. No doubt in descending this stair, and seeing himself covered with

human blood, the assassin had been overtaken by a momentary weakness, forcing him to seek support from the wall, which had preserved the impression of his homicidal hand, thus accusing the guilty man and indicating his route. The servant went up stairs greatly alarmed, following the traces of drops of blood, which step after step pointed out the direction he was to take, in order to discover the crime. He reached the gloomy and isolated chamber occupied in the house by this poor old lady, who had never believed in evil, because she never could comprehend it. The traces of blood continued to her very door, and were sprinkled on the floor, the boards of which refused to absorb the stains of the liquid blood, which still warm, seemed to preserve the vitality of which the corpse had been deprived. The body was extended on the bed; the eyes wide open from the alarm and agony attendant on her last hours; one arm, as white and livid as if made of wax, was hanging down from the bed, as if to attest the utter isolation of the innocent victim. The horrorstruck servant uttered a cry of dismay, and ran to call his master. What a spectacle for these unfortunate people!

her unhappy daughter fell on the floor, as if struck by a flash of lightning. The Commandant, pale and appalled, but more self possessed, caused the door of his house to be closed, a crowd having assembled at the cries of the servant, and then sent to the authorities to inform them of what had occurred; but on their arrival, nothing was found but the silent corpse. Bloody wounds were visible, declaring the crime, but not the criminal, and it was strange that not even the most vague suspicions could attach to any one, and not the slightest indication was discovered, which could throw any light on the proceedings. The servant's room was in the porch outside the door of the house; this door, which could only be opened from within, he found ajar when he returned from the street, which led to the conclusion that the murderer had concealed himself on the previous night in the house, or had got in by the roof. This last version was not probable, nor indeed almost possible, as the house in question, mine, and that of the Countess —, have the same roof. The maid servant had passed the night at the wedding of one of her sisters, which was proved by all those who

met her there. The other servant was ill in the hospital, and had never left her bed. In spite of this the two former were arrested, but after a certain time they were liberated.

“You may judge of the degree of horror attached to the crime, when the very idea of being suspected of it worked so powerfully on the mind of the servant, who was a most respectable man, that he lost the use of his reason, and from prison, he was conveyed to a lunatic asylum. The maid’s character was so injured by having been arrested and implicated in this mysterious affair, that she could not find a single family to engage her as a servant. The young man she was to have married deserted her, and overwhelmed by ignominy and misery, she gave herself up to evil courses and was ruined.

“In the meanwhile, the whole town was perplexed. Justice could discover nothing; there was not even a remote suspicion to cast a ray of light on the profound darkness. Crime, attended by mystery, is doubly terrific, and increases just as fear does in the obscurity of night. The wish for the punishment of the criminal caused the in-

dignant public loudly to call for *justice*, and yet the judges, with their axes raised, could find no one on whom the blow could fall. Thus the public clamour for justice was vain, seeing that God thought fit to reserve it for his own arm; and I can only repeat that nothing was discovered at that time, or since, or ever will be."

"And what became of the Commandant and his family?" asked the stranger, deeply interested and affected by the relation he had just heard; and for whom the house, which had seemed to him an innocent Pariah, was now converted into a mournful and mysterious den.

"You know," replied the lady with a smile, "that strangers reproach us Spaniards with considerable levity, with constantly yielding to our first impulses, and rarely observing strict and severe rules of action, often dictated by delicate propriety, but equally often by cold egotism. The Spaniards, frank and ardent at heart, do not reflect when following these benevolent influences; and if, on this account, they always appear courageous and generous, they are also considered thoughtless. This is, as the French say, *Avoir les défauts*

de ses qualités. Consequently, no sooner had the judicial authorities quitted the house, than I hastened to impart aid and consolation to my unhappy friends. No! never can I forget, never will be effaced from my soul, the miserable picture presented to me! The impression was so fearful that it cost me a severe illness. The corpse was not visible, as it still remained in the room where the murder had been committed, and yet the odour of blood which infected the whole atmosphere, betrayed its presence! The water in the basin of the fountain was still red, as if the trickling stream, destined to renew its limpid waters, had gone on in its straight course, without deigning to mingle with it, or as if those drops of innocent blood sufficed to render the fountain turbid for ever, as well as to blast the conscience of the criminal. My poor friend, who loved her mother so dearly, was writhing in convulsions. On seeing me, she could at last cry out, weep, and give way to her repressed grief. Her husband was overwhelmed with sorrow; the shock seemed to have arrested the circulation of his blood, his face was of a livid paleness, and his lips stiffened by horror.

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I took his unfortunate wife home with me. and a short time afterwards, the husband having received another appointment, they went to a distant province, it being impossible for them to remain in the place where such a horrible catastrophe had occurred."

"But with what object could this murder be committed?" asked the gentleman.

"It was inferred that the robbery of the victim had been intended. That very morning, according to what her daughter declared, her mother had received through the hands of her lawyer a large sum of money ; consequently, considerable suspicion fell on him, and though there was no proof to support this idea, still the lawyer has remained ever since in evil repute. Unanimous suspicion often proves more injurious than a fact ; for in the latter case the culprit may give explanations, or clear himself, and, above all, exhibit repentance, and thus obtain that pardon which the God of Mercy has not reserved for himself alone, but which man may also grant, according to the precepts of the Holy Gospel."

"Your observation is just," replied the

stranger; "society, which is, and ought to be merciful, after a criminal deed is punished, remains inexorable to impunity of crime. This is logical and natural. Have you heard since that time of your poor neighbours?"

"I had at first frequent letters from Rosalie, but latterly I have entirely lost sight of them. They were very much pleased with the place to which they retired. The husband quitted the military service, and had considerable success in all he undertook; consequently, he is now one of the most highly considered men in his province—a *notability*, according to the modern phrase. He has been Alcalde, provincial deputy, and enjoyed various other offices in the innumerable branches of constitutional authorities. As for Rosalie, she has lived a contented, domestic, and retired life."

"It would appear, therefore," said the stranger, with a cynical smile, "that the house alone has preserved an impression of horror, effaced from all hearts?"

"The house has certainly been stigmatized by the crime, while in our hearts feelings of grief have been mitigated.

Sorrow cannot be eternal in this world: thus has He disposed it, who knows best what suits us. Every day a new sun causes us to forget the one which set the evening before; each fresh flower that blows attracts our eyes from those that are withered. Absence is a veil, but not a transparent one; the future absorbs the present, and its keen excitement weakens our impressions, just as the rays of the sun cause lively colours to fade. Do not find fault with oblivion: this balsam, this panacea, this precious elixir of life, which God bestows on His creatures, as He does refreshing dew on herbs and plants—without it, what would our lives be?"

"I do not know," answered he, "whether to class what you say as sublime philosophy, or as cold and consummate indifference."

"Neither so high nor so low; it is a simple and practical truth; one of those numerous dispositions of nature, against which the pride of man rebels in vain. But, tell me, do you still wish to inhabit the house? I should be delighted if the presence of a good and amiable family, were to dissipate the gloom of this funereal abode,

as the smile of Aurora chases away the sadness of night."

"Thanks, madam, but I do not intend to live in it. Though a son of this enlightend age, still the positive character which distinguishes it, cannot efface the impressions I have imbibed. This house remains the depository of a terrible mystery; so people of good repute had better avoid it, and leave it alone with its secret, as those ought to be left, whose conscience is burdened with a crime."

IV.—VAL DE PAZ.

THERE is a pretty village, which we will designate the Val de Paz, which has for its site a valley placed between the undulations of a vast range of the Cordilleras. A brilliant sun gilds its harvests; its gardens are watered by clear rivulets; the glossy orange is covered with dewy pearls, like a royal mantle; the delicate pomegranate is decorated with coral berries; the fragrant almond tree with garlands of brilliant pink; and the fruit trees are preparing to adorn themselves with their snowy apparel, so

fragile, that it is scattered even before the fugitive Spring disappears, which saw it blossom. The Val de Paz is separated from the rest of the world by mountains, that rear their heads like gigantic screens, provided by nature to guard the cradle of her favourite child. In the centre stands the quiet, holy, village church. Under the roof of the peasant the plough reposes in the place of honour—the emblem of labour, and which gives the bread of each day. The young girls learn their catechism, kiss the hand of the priest, and ask for the blessing of their parents.

The illustrious spirit of innovation, peculiar to the present age, disdainfully keeps aloof from such obscurity, deeming the Val de Paz a mummy; effacing it from the ranks of the living, and, saying to it, with solemn gravity, like another buried Pompeii, “May the earth lie light on you!”

A beautiful Spring evening had succeeded a lovely day; the gentle breeze, like a Sybarite, refreshing itself on the snowy summits of the hills, gathering perfume as it swept along, from the aromatic heaths, covering their declivities. The calm hour of twilight was approaching in the valley;

the sun only still gilding, before it set, the highest peaks of the mountains, the crests of which appeared to blaze like those signal bonfires in the mountains of Asturia, which obtained for their progenitor the name of *Cien Fuegos*.

There was not the smallest cloud in the sky, where the last rosy splendours of the sun could take refuge. The joyous murmurs of a rivulet were heard, meandering through the gardens in a hundred different directions; docile in following the course traced out for it by man, this child of the clouds and fountains was seen at one time encompassing an orange tree with a circle of burnished steel, then flowing like a sheet of crystal on newly sown ground, uncertain whether to yield to the seductions of the sun, attracting it upwards, or to those of the thirsty soil, longing to imbibe it, in order to nourish the bright plants forming its rich vestment.

The cricket was uttering its sharp chirp; the first artist in the world, in despair that in spite of his incessant importunities he has not yet been declared deacon of the Philharmonists. The bleating of sheep was also heard, plaintive as their nature,

soft as their wool, mournful as the symbol of the victim they personify; the prolonged lowing of the cow calling her calf, and the monotonous buzzing of the stupid, silly gadfly, pursuing its straight course, careless as to what it comes in contact with. The swallows were poising themselves gaily and restlessly in the air, uttering their glad notes. Inoffensive bats were commencing their silent drowsy flight, melancholy birds, devoid of feathers, hiding from the light of day, like the bashful poor; so ugly, that they are an object of ridicule in villages, and so persecuted, that they must be tempted to ask, whether man imagines that they have usurped that existence which God has bestowed on both. The frogs too, gave utterance to their noisy serenade; rustic syrens, who from the recesses of fresh, verdant rushes, invite the wayfarer to plunge into the cool, crystal waters. The busy bees abandon their labours grumbling, because enjoying dew-drops mingled with honey, in the bosom of the flowers.

The mournful and plaintive lament of the bird of night, the harmonious nightingale, tempts you to go and console her, for

her song has a melancholy sound amid the harmony of nature, showing that within her breast is a chord, as within the heart of man, always ready to vibrate to sorrow, although the day may have been brilliant, and the night serene. The grave and misanthropical screech owl alone, disturbed at the approach of darkness by this general concert, fled from the old tower where it was cynically ruminating, uttering energetic cries, as if dictatorially imposing universal silence; but amid all these rural voices, so full of indefinable enchantment for those who know how to enjoy practically the charms of nature, the sonorous, well modulated, expressive voice of man, dominated the scene; the rural peasants singing in returning to their homes. Who taught these men? who imparted to them the elevated and delicate sense of poetry, the fascinating and original melody of song? Their inspiration is that of *feeling*, which requires no aid from art; while, without feeling, art is a corpse, a well formed body without a soul.

V.—A MILITARY BILLET.

As we have already observed, this small Spanish village, old fashioned and simple, yet joyous, was peacefully illuminated by the light from the altar and the sun, while that of the present age had not yet penetrated into it. On the retired spot where the harmonies we have described resounded, neither political harangues nor patriotic songs had ever been heard. They had no idea of *voluntary* enlistment, for the purpose of wearing a uniform, or from any other motive. What, then, was the astonishment of the primitive and peaceful inhabitants of the Val de Paz, when, one evening, they saw a troop of men, partly military, and partly peasants, enter the village, shouting out vigorously "Viva la Libertada!" At the sight of this band of armed and dusty men, and on hearing this cry, so strange to them, the peasants felt the utmost consternation. A report immediately prevailed that they were prisoners, who, having escaped from jail in the capital, were flying to the mountains, celebrating by victorious strains the liberty they had recovered.

The alarm was universal, but by degrees the villagers became more tranquil, when they heard the stern tap of the drum, and saw a column of soldiers descending the mountain slopes in good order, and with a martial tread. We must mention, that the people entertain the most profound sympathy for those soldiers who spring from their own ranks, with which are mingled both pity and admiration. They look on them as victims, but victims consecrated to a holy cause—that of religion, loyalty, and *Independence*—not that of the individual, but of their country, in the same way in which it was defended during the heroic and immortal war of *Independence*, having preserved this denomination as a mark of praise and distinction.

At the arrival of this troop all was cleared up. It was said at the time (though utterly unknown in the Val de Paz), that a party of rebels had taken refuge in the mountains, consequently a column composed of national volunteers and troops of the line, had been sent in pursuit of them. It was the advance guard, who by entering the village so noisily had spread such alarm, but when the circumstance was explained, all minds

were tranquillized, and the only surprise the dwellers in the Val de Paz felt, was first, that there should be soldiers without having entered into alehouses; secondly, that there should be some under twenty years of age, and others above fifty; thirdly, that they should sing so victoriously about liberty, never having been taken prisoners; and, fourthly, that there were rebels at all in the Sierra.

The troop had orders to take up their quarters in the Val de Paz. It was commanded by a captain named Don Andr  s Pe  alta, who was billeted on the widow of a rich and respectable farmer. This widow had a son, who continued to follow the same pursuits which had enriched his father and his ancestors, without any modern innovations. There was also a young daughter of fifteen, the bright star of this simple, modest, and virtuous home.

The Captain was a man of pleasing appearance, but of a melancholy disposition, soured by repeated disappointments in his career, and, like many others in these days of tumults and revolutions, he had been the victim of adverse circumstances, keenly felt by him, being the type of a common

class in our day, I mean those who rise superior to their position. Nevertheless, the pleasing atmosphere of this peaceful dwelling seemed to have a beneficent influence on his perturbed feelings, agitated by dissatisfied pride. He became attached to the young daughter, the idol of her home and the pride of the village. She possessed the fascinations of youth and innocence, those guarantees of happiness which virtue ensures, and of worldly comfort, which the goods of fortune offer. This last point must have been peculiarly seductive to a man whose chief ambition was to make a figure in the world, and to be esteemed by it, and the more ardently that his wish had been hitherto frustrated by circumstances.

Peñalta, with his brilliant uniform and his air of entire *respectability*, as his haughty air had been designated by the villagers, had captivated general admiration, but more particularly that of his two hostesses, so, on the day when he demanded from Doña Mariana the hand of her daughter Rosalie, she neither could nor wished to conceal her satisfaction.

The docile girl, seeing her mother pleased, thought it right to be the same; her com-

panions and neighbours echoed these sentiments; the son of the house alone showed the most open and decided opposition to the projected union. He explained to his mother, that their wealth, which consisted in some farms, but principally in his incessant toil and numerous flocks, would remain prosperous if united, but that if each was to resume his own share, and divide or realize the property, it would be to the disadvantage of them all. He also demonstrated by good reasons, that his sister ought to marry one of the village neighbours, without leaving the spot where she had been educated, and where, from father to son, they had all lived happily, beloved and esteemed; but none of these judicious observations had any effect on the illusions of Doña Mariana, who was filled with enthusiasm at the brilliant prospects of her daughter Rosalie.

The continued opposition of her son only served to exasperate his worthy but foolish mother, who at last told him that his objection to divide the property doubtless arose from his wish to secure the largest share. In spite of this harsh and unjust remark, which had been suggested by others to the

good woman, the son continued openly to oppose the marriage of his sister, so that the mother, irritated by this resistance, and instigated by her preference for her daughter, declared that she would never separate from her, and that she would follow her wherever she went.

The project of the excellent widow could not be otherwise than agreeable to the captain, who hastened to accept the offer, and to promote the scheme by every means in his power. The marriage took place a short time afterwards, and the new family departed.

The household lived during seven years in the most uninterrupted harmony, thanks to the angelic dispositions of the mother and daughter, to their total absence of pretension, and also to the very confined domestic circle in which they moved. The existence of these two women was limited to admiring the Captain, now become Commandant, and to adoring the three children, who were the issue of the marriage. Beyond this they were entire nullities, reduced to insignificance by the haughty pride of Commandant Peñalta.

This is a sad world, where we can only

acquire a position by conquering it, and only secure it by bullying! Poor weak humanity oppresses the modest man, and honours the insolent upstart. This alone suffices to show us our human inferiority, and to make us long for that superior justice that no brilliancy can dazzle, and to whom no darkness is impenetrable. It was thus with these two women; the modesty which accepted, the humility which yielded, the goodness which conformed to his will, far from being appreciated as the finest and most delicate pearls of feminine jewels, made them appear weak and inert, serving only to strengthen contempt and despotism, in the heart of him they strove to please.

This being the case, Don Andr  s Pe  alta, who was excessively vain, and anxious beyond measure to be appreciated for his virtues, without ever having exercised them—a Catonic hypocrisy having replaced religion—treated his wife and his mother-in-law with the utmost affection and consideration in the presence of strangers, and, as the French say, *se faisait bon prince*—that is, he deigned to descend to the sphere of those who inclined themselves before him—but, in their family circle, he had his

revenge by behaving towards them with the most consummate pride, and the most sovereign disdain.

The mistakes and little oversights which Rosalie committed in society, roused his indignation. It was but natural that the poor young woman, brought up in a farm house, should know nothing of the customs and conventions of a populous city, that she had no idea of dressing with elegance, nor of remaining from three to six hours at her toilet. She could neither sing, nor dance, nor play the piano, and the foolish vanity of her husband wounded by these things, to show his ill humour adopted a phrase, with which he constantly distressed and humiliated his wife—" *You know absolutely nothing !*"

There are two things which render the most unjust and malevolent tyranny innocuous: the one is the strong iron, which invariably resists with calm and equal strength; the other the flexible reed, which always bends. It was thus then, that the most profound peace reigned in this house; the despotism which prevailed there, only encountered weak and yielding reeds. The will of the despot swept over this domestic

interior, like the rush of the hurricane over a level plain. This plain was, however, neither barren nor sterile, but covered with fresh, green, verdure.

VI.—THE PAGE OF WRITING.

DURING this time, the relations of Doña Mariana with her son were every day more embittered. The good lady, submissive in all things to her son-in-law, was by no means satisfied with the accounts sent to her by the young man, who had continued to manage his mother's affairs, which were still mixed up with his own. Conforming to the opinion, and docile to the advice of Don Andrès, Doña Mariana at last wrote to her son, demanding that her share of the property should be realized. After many discussions, this affair was concluded, shortly after the arrival of the family at M——. The result satisfied every one, and the good lady felt herself lightened of an enormous burden, having by this means put an end to all motives of dispute as to her future succession, either on the part of her son or her son-in-law.

One morning after church, the notary who had been appointed by her son, arrived to see the old lady, and remitted to her five hundred ounces of gold, the last payment of the produce of her capital. Doña Mariana had signed a receipt for the sum, and seated beside her daughter, she was congratulating herself on the happy conclusion of this affair, when the eldest of her grandchildren, just returned from school, entered the room. The child was carrying proudly in his hand a page he had just written, and showed it to his grandmother. She took it with that eagerness and pleasure, which everything connected with her grandchildren always excited in her mind, and read the maxim which headed the copy in a firm hand, and which was repeated at each line, in the child's writing: "*Do not count on the morrow, for you may never see it.*" The old lady looked at each line with an approving smile, and said to the child, "Always the same thing over again, little Andrès."

"Yes, dear grandmamma," answered the child; "all the lines say the same thing as the copy, except the last."

His grandmother cast her eyes again on

the paper, and read, "Written by Andrés Peñalta, the 20th March, 1840."

"My little man," said his grandmother, "this is only the 19th of March, the Patriarch's *fête* day."

The child laughed, and answered, "It is true; I have made a mistake! But what does it matter? let us suppose that I wrote it to-morrow."

"Do you so quickly forget the sentences you write?" said his grandmother to him; "does it not stand distinctly there written, '*Do not count on the morrow, for you may never see it?*'"

"Well, I will correct it!" said the child, and taking up the page he ran off with it. A moment after he returned, and gave it to his grandmother.

"My child," said she, instantly, "why have you corrected these numbers with red ink? Good Heavens! it looks like a date of blood!"

"The red ink was upon my father's table, and it was very pretty," said the child.

"But I," said his mother, "think it very ugly; it shows the correction too plainly. Tear it up, my boy, and to-morrow—God

willing!—you shall write another page for your grandmother.”

“No, no!” said the latter; “give it to me, my good child. It was for me you wrote it, and by it you remind me of a good and holy truth—that we ought always to be prepared for death, which places us before the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge of souls. I wish to preserve it as a good remembrance of you, and as a good counsel. Listen to me, my child,” said she, taking up a pile of gold pieces off the table, “I am so satisfied with your industry, and with this page that is a proof of it, that I intend these twenty ounces of gold for you, which you will get at my death; and that this may be known, I will write my intentions at the bottom of this page, and wrap the gold in it.”

The good lady took the pen with which she had just signed the receipt for the lawyer, and wrote at the bottom of the page, underneath the name of the child, “*Mariana Perèz bequeaths him this sum as a souvenir.*” Then folding the gold in the paper, she locked it up along with her other papers in a casket, and took it with her to her room.

It was that very night that the horrible murder was committed on the person of the unfortunate lady, which was detailed at the beginning of this story. We have described the grief that the catastrophe occasioned to Rosalie, and the deep impression made on her husband, who, no doubt, then repented of the bitter existence his tyranny had caused the unhappy victim to lead.

The pecuniary loss inflicted on them from this important robbery, which never could be discovered, the mystery that hid the crime, in spite of every research and every inquiry, decided the family, as we already mentioned, to leave the place for the new appointment solicited by Commandant Peñalta.

VII.—A NOTABILITY.

THEY had passed ten years in their new home, where from the moment of their arrival, both husband and wife had met with the most cordial reception.

Their position had improved, Don Andrés having inherited from an uncle in

America, and retired from the service. He had accepted various employments, the results of which had all been favourable; among other enterprizes, he had undertaken demolishing convents, the valuable materials of which he sold at a low price. He had been Alcalde, and was at this moment a Provincial Deputy; in short, he had at last attained the dignity of a *Notability*, and become the type of a modern citizen—that is, a great distributor of sonorous phrases, interspersed with heterogeneous terms—a zealous apostle of morality, a fervent proselyte of philanthropy, an arrogant antagonist of all superstition—in which he included the observation of Sundays and Saints' days—a priest of the goddess *Reason*, a high priest of *St. Positive*, grand master of Prosopopeya, a professor of the noble modern arts of contempt and impertinence, the skilful architect of his own pedestal—nothing was wanting in this modern type; who was considered as a Solomon among judges, and as the Demosthenes of a company recently formed for the purpose of constructing a canal, the works of which were in a state of great forwardness, and which only required

money to form it with, and water to fill it.

We do not pretend to personify the epoch in the Señor Don Andrés, but its influences. It is certain that, under a different order of things, he would have been considered the advanced sentinel of intolerance, the Seid of routine, the Cerberus of custom house duties, and the vigilant officer of useful and necessary innovation; we say this in honour of truth, and in order to paint with the utmost exactness the type we are describing, and by no means to flatter the present epoch.

Owing to the privilege upright souls blessedly enjoy, of not allowing themselves to be overwhelmed by misfortune, Rosalie, being exempt from violent passions, had regained her usual natural calmness and serenity of mind, which is, undoubtedly, a proof of predestination.

She might have been considered happy, but for the manner in which her husband behaved to her, who, daily more intoxicated by the pride of his good position, by the success of his enterprises, and by the general consideration with which he was regarded, treated his poor wife with a

degree of harshness and disdain, which every day increased. The education of the children, who were much spoiled by Rosalie, was the continual theme of his observations, and furnished him with an occasion to repeat his incessant reproach—*You know actually nothing.* Rosalie often wept on hearing this phrase, but she never replied, inwardly making this reflection: “It is very natural that my husband should think and speak thus, for he knows so many things, while I know nothing except how to sew and to pray.”

How true it is that innate and genuine virtue, like innocence, is ignorant of its own existence! but time was to demonstrate to Don Andrès, how much knowledge that woman possesses who is a genuine Christian, and how infinitely preferable humble virtues are to more heroic ones.

VIII.—THE LEGACY.

ONE day that Rosalie was teaching her daughter, a child naturally as gentle as her mother, all she knew herself, which

was to sew and to pray, the youngest of her sons came into the room.

"Mother," said he, giving her a paper, "look at that page, written by Andrès when he was a little boy."

Rosalie took the paper and read with stupefaction, "*Do not count on the morrow, for you may never see it.*"

At the bottom of the page was the date of the 19th of March, all red, like blood, with these words, "*written by Andrès Peñalta,*" and beneath, in the hand of her mother (the victim of the mysterious and unpunished crime), "her only will and testament—*Mariana Perèz bequeaths him this sum as a souvenir.*"

"Where did you find this paper?" asked Rosalie, in a voice so strange and so altered, that her children looked at her in astonishment.

"In my father's room, among some old papers," said the lad.

Rosalie, looking actually livid, fled to her own room, bolted the door, and closed the shutters to exclude the light of day.

The veil that, during ten years, had concealed from her the murderer of her

mother, now fell from her eyes—this horrible secret had emerged from the darkness—the victim pointed out from her tomb the bloody date, on a document preserved along with the stolen money, and which could only be in the possession of the robber and the murderer; and this document was in the hands of her husband!

Rosalie fell on a seat, and hid her face with her hands. She remained thus for three hours, motionless and stupified, cold as a corpse when the blood has ceased to circulate, speechless, and as if suddenly struck by paralysis.

During the first hour, she had no power to think, all her ideas were confounded in a frightful vertigo. During the second, despair agitated her soul like a lion in its den, not knowing how to get out and seeking some vent for its roarings. When the third hour arrived, reflection presented itself, stern and dignified, leading in one hand Christian moderation, and in the other worldly prudence, the former with its mercy, the latter with its warning voice. Then the Christian, the mother, and the wife, folded her hands and cried, "To Thee, to Thee, our Father, and our Judge,

belongs justice—to Thee vengeance alone belongs!”

She rose hurriedly, lighted a candle, and with a steady hand burned at its flame the accusing paper, and then threw herself on her bed.

A few instants afterwards, her husband arrived, and asked her with his usual rudeness, why she had locked her door.

On hearing the voice of her mother's murderer, and in the painful consciousness of his being near her, the unfortunate woman was seized with a fit of trembling horror, and she replied through her closed door that she was ill. The husband went away grumbling; he did not even permit her the right to suffer in silence.

Rosalie remained shut up in her room for eight days, not allowing any one to see her, not even her children; making the pretext of violent pains in her head, but in reality because she dreaded lest the terrible secret, which she had resolved to bury within her own breast, should involuntarily escape amid her delirious cries of despair. In order to ensure her silence, she wished to weaken her physical strength, reducing her bodily frame by fasting and

tears, and to acquire moral courage in prayer, and in her love for her mother.

When she at last rose, and her husband saw her for the first time, he started back in terror, and he had good reason to do so. The hair of the young mother had become perfectly white. The pallid green of atrophy overspread her hollow cheeks, and her staring, sunken eyes burned feverishly, surrounded by a dark circle.

"There is no doubt," said Andrès to her, "that you are not only ill, but very ill indeed; you must have suffered terribly."

"Terribly!" said the invalid.

"And why did you not call in a physician?" said her husband, impatiently; "*you know nothing*, not even how to nurse yourself when you are ill."

The martyr survived this fatal blow a year, with death in her heart, and no relief but that of knowing that it was mortal. She took a whole year to descend to the tomb—life is tenacious at thirty.

"What can be the matter with your wife?" said Andrès' numerous friends to him.

"A sombre melancholy which devours

both her body and her mind," answered he; "the physicians prescribe a great many things for her, but nothing gives her any relief." And when he was alone with his wife he said to her, "The doctor says that he cannot divine the cause of your illness, and that you will tell him nothing—*you know nothing*—you cannot even explain what you suffer."

At last, this second victim of crime was entirely prostrated. The physicians were puzzled, and having tried every resource, gave her up. The hour of eternal repose was come. Her confessor shed tears, and lavished consolation beside the bed of the dying woman. Prepared to appear before the tribunal of God, when she felt that she had only a few moments longer to live, the noble victim made a sign to her attendants to leave her and summoned her husband.

"Father of my children," said she to him, in a solemn voice, "I have known two things in this life."

"You?" said her husband, in surprise.

"Yes."

"And what are these two things?" said the culprit, confounded, his haggard eyes starting from their sockets.

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“ To be silent in life, because I was a mother, and to pardon at the hour of death, because I am a Christian.” And the holy martyr closed her eyes to open them no more.

POOR DOLORES!

CHAPTER I.

BETWEEN San Lucar de Barrameda and Cadiz, where the river Bites forsakes the shores of Spain, and the smiling city projects into the midst of the waters, as if to meet her fleets, a quiet and retired village meets the eye, on an elevation: its name is Rota. History, and the ruins of a magnificent castle belonging to the Dukes d'Arcos, testify to the noble and ancient origin of this village.

To the south east, towards the Atlantic Ocean, the lofty terrace on which Rota is situated, slopes perpendicularly to the sea beach which lies at its base. The landscape is clothed with that monotonous

aspect, which the sea imparts to the shores against which it breaks; its arid sands alternately invaded and abandoned by the waves. It would be vain to seek here, as we do elsewhere, the secrets which the ocean occasionally allows to escape from its depths, or the melancholy vestiges of some sad and solitary shipwreck. Nothing is to be seen on the beach of Rota, but innocent fragile shells, or starfish, which in losing their life, lose their brightness also; flakes of foam, which when cast aside by the waves, lose their lustre and quickly collapse; the poor polypus, whether dead or living we know not, for its life is as inert as its death; the clumsy crab, balancing its heavy mass on its deformed claws, moving along with the effort and awkwardness of a cripple on crutches; a multitude of tangled seaweed cast disdainfully on shore by the waves; pieces of cordage, or sculptured wood, not the sad fragments of unknown shipwrecks, but the relics of decayed fishing boats; and the slight graceful arabesques traced on the even surface of the level sands, by the light tracks of seagulls. This is all that is offered by the lonely strands which encompass Spain—neutral ground

between sea and land; a soil without flowers, a shore without pearls. To the left of the village, the sea disports itself, and forms a bay, which would make a good harbour if it had more depth, and if the waves, when retiring, did not disclose a vast surface of black mud, interspersed with stones. The full tide rolls in, close to the habitations of man, protected by a natural rampart of rocks, against which the billows lash and rebound, like the agitated moanings of a troubled heart.

At the point of the triangle formed by the village, lies the mole, to which are fastened the feluccas employed in conveying fruit and vegetables daily to the city, and the pilot boats, that guide into safe port richly freighted foreign vessels.

The distance of Rota from every frequented road, its total absence of all communication with other villages, and its humble and unpretending position, impart to it an atmosphere of peace, and patriarchal tranquillity, which seaport towns do not usually possess. Our conceptions of rural life are far from being realized by this village, situated on the brink of the ocean, deafened by incessant tumult, irri-

tated by continual agitation, similar to that of the age in which we live. Intrepid barks venture thither, each with its different freight, impelled or retarded by the waves and the currents, like those restless souls who disquiet the present generation. We prefer thinking of a rural hamlet, where the horizon consists of waving fields of corn, and olive plantations; where we hear the warbling of birds, the crowing of cocks, the peals of village bells, and the murmuring foliage of trees, with an adjacent village, designated as *our neighbour*. Here sea and land lie side by side, like peace and tumult, stability and change, security and danger, productive and destructive power.

It would, however, be scarcely possible to find a more pacific spot than Rota, or a race more skilful than its inhabitants in agriculture, which is indeed the branch of industry peculiar to this country. Each villager has a patch of earth which he tills, and few of them practise farming on a large scale. The vine, the gourd, the water melon, and every other kind of fruit and vegetables, are both early and excellent, and form the chief produce of the soil. Still more luxuriant are pumpkins and

tomatas, both in quantity and quality; their abundance having procured for the peasants of Rota the pseudonym of *Tomateros*. Not less numerous are the enormous numbers of carved wicker and osier baskets, employed in the transport of all this produce.

The Andalucians who are so well known for making a joke of everything, and of every body without exception, and who consequently invent an endless number of stories, nick names, *bon mots*, and couplets, have a vast collection applicable to the simple inhabitants of Rota, who it was said, once on a time thought they could scale Heaven with the aid of their wicker baskets, and they piled them up so high, that they reached beyond the moon and the stars. There required only one more to arrive at Heaven, but this one 'could nowhere be found. Not choosing to be baffled in their enterprise by so trifling an obstacle, they abstracted from the pile the first basket they had placed there, and of course the whole edifice fell to the ground.

CHAPTER II.

Few things are more pleasing to the eye, or grateful to the heart, than to see peasants returning from their work in the evening. Each arrives on a donkey, frequently followed by her foal, gambolling merrily round its mother, apparently eager to enjoy its evanescent youth, some prophetic instinct probably making it divine, that these joys and pleasures, and gay gambols, are to be the first, and the last, of a future sad life of toil and misery. The labourer brings home baskets, heaped up with fruit and vegetables; the harvest of the day being completed by some fine bunches of maize, destined for the supper of the family. His wife is expecting him, seated before her door, while she sends her children to meet their father; this escort is

augmented by a poor dog, ugly and dingy, but good and faithful, who forms part of the family and who would not desert his master, and the scanty fragments he bestows on him, for the luxurious morsels of a palace. Some fathers take their infants in their arms, while the elder ones either ride on the donkey, or play all kinds of pranks with the ass's foal, and run races with it—each group happily wending their way to their various homes, where the good mother, and the faithful wife, await their arrival.

How often have we gazed with profound emotion at these pictures of pure domestic felicity, neither seeking secrecy nor display, tender brilliancy nor obscurity, like the soft light of the moon. We have often meditated with sentiments of bitter sadness on material and social life, with its insatiable ambition, and its refined tastes, and lamented that its vapid elegance of manner and form, should be substituted for more pure and holy joys—evanescent pleasures, incapable of satisfying the heart, or of inspiring poetry of soul, or purity of conscience! why, disdaining the true happiness that God bestows, and even lavishes on us,

have we conceived the idea of a fictitious existence, which by its aspirations towards what is impossible, only casts contempt on that kind of felicity, which both Providence, destiny, and reason originally designed for man?

When shall we learn that human happiness is not to be found, in the indulgence of sudden impulses? that is not a balloon inflated by gas, to be dragged along by the breath of passion, without aim or object; and that what suits us best, is placed at our disposal, close to us, like the flowers sown by God in the path he has traced out for us. When will our poets, those nightingales who charm our happy hours, and console the many sorrowing nights in our existence, when will they learn that instead of exalting, exaggerating, and idealizing the passions, they have the power to guide and enlighten man, and thus contribute to render their fellow creatures both better, wiser, and happier? Passions in the moral condition of man, like fevers in the physical constitution, are the diseases of humanity, which neither the efforts of morality nor the skill of the physician can entirely subdue; and it would be difficult, unless in

writing an idyll, to paint scenes of human life, without the passions being sooner or later mingled with them; but, in my opinion, it is an evil and dangerous tendency, to represent the state to which they reduce us, as either noble, admirable, or interesting; it is a fatal error to paint them as peculiar to superior minds. Those who possess vigorous intellect, know how to guide their passions when good, and to subdue them when evil.

An old man, seated on a donkey, was returning to Rota one fine summer evening; he was followed by two handsome, well-made lads, with bronzed faces, carrying hoes on their shoulders. At a little distance from their house, they saw coming towards them a child of five years old, dragging by the hand a girl still younger; the boy was quite flushed from the efforts he was making to hasten the tottering steps of his little sister. The father stopped, and the eldest of the lads lifted the two children on the donkey, placing one on the right and the other on the left of the old man, and the animal, without any other warning, resumed its tranquil pace towards the house, stopping in front of it, without

its being necessary to sound in its long ears lying flat back on its head, the *So!* of the muleteers.

Before entering this house, which belongs to the old peasant, we ought to describe it, and to make acquaintance with its inhabitants.

After having passed through the principal door, you enter a spacious flagged court; to the right, there is a flower border crowded with so many flowers, shrubs, and creepers, that it seems quite a congress of plants; and an arbour covered with splendid vines with colossal roots. Opposite, are the doors of the kitchen, the hall, the poultry yard, and a massive outside stair of brick, leading to a loft or granary. On the right of the street door, the house contained a sitting room and a bedroom. The same arrangement was on the left; and, in continuation, there were some small rooms opening on the court. One quiet, independent little chamber was next to the kitchen, looking on the poultry yard. The master of the house, Mateo Lopez, occupied the whole of the left side with his family, including his daughter Catherine, married to a rustic swain, whose duty it was to look after horses

in their pastures, and she was mother of the two children whom we saw coming to meet their grandfather. The attics were let, at the rate of six réals a month, to the widow of an unfortunate sailor, who had been drowned, leaving a sick wife, and two children. The poor widow did not pay her rent, but Mateo never thought of asking her to do so; he made this simple and judicious reflexion on the subject, "If the poor thing has got nothing, how can she pay me?"

The chamber adjoining the kitchen had been given gratis to a poor monk, after the convents were closed. The lodging on the right was let to a coastguard and his wife—the only people who paid their rent. The coastguard was a very worthy man, named Canuto; this name signifies a reed, and never was it bestowed on an individual more lengthy, or more formal and precise; he had been a soldier, but a solid, grave soldier, chary of speech; and since he had been appointed to the coastguard and enjoyed the confidence of Government, his original gravity had deepened into the impassibility of a marble Cato.

Canuto, who, from the day of his birth, had never known a will of his own, was, of

all men, the least disposed to be jealous of his authority; he never even changed his waistcoat without asking his wife what he was to put on. Fifty years before he had been of a fair red and white complexion, but the monster Time, and the fatigues of his profession, had left him no other traces of these advantages than a pair of enormous moustaches, resembling bottle brushes. His wife, however, declared, that he had been fairer than a lily, and whiter than flax.

Pepa, this was the name of his wife, was considerably younger than himself. She was one of those exemplary women who possess in their own nature the most precious of all dowries, devoting themselves to their husbands as much from love as from duty, or rather blending love and duty; a combination equally virtuous and excellent, wise and admirable. Women of this kind have the talent of guiding their husbands, of palliating their faults, when they commit them, and of persuading themselves, as well as others, that their husbands are pursuing a right course. They have prudence to regulate their partners without their finding it out, just as mothers have songs to soothe and lull their children to sleep; they inspire

resignation by their words, and by their example; they have the organs of strict order and neatness, inducing their husbands to be polite in their manners, and neat in their appearance; they are endowed with so much amiability, that they conceal their own sacrifices, that those who impose them, may not be accused of selfishness; and above all, they display devoted attachment, self-denial, and renunciation; qualities almost ridiculous, when the husband is unworthy of them, if their origin were not so admirable.

Canuto scarcely ever opened his lips, and he was right; but, when he did, he spoke laconically, in short sentences, with entire confidence, persuaded that all ears were as benevolent as those of his wife. In fact, our coastguard was not far wrong, in so far as regarded the inhabitants of the house in which he lived.

CHAPTER III.

THE poor monk to whom the worthy Lopez family had given shelter, and whose name was Father Nolasco, was an excellent man. He had certainly not invented either gunpowder or the art of printing; he was not the coadjutor of any encyclopedia; but he knew what he required to know for the fulfilment of his duties. If he was rather deficient in dignity, he was at all events full of zeal, and he knew the people, their habits, and their language, so far as was necessary for the purpose of attracting them into the path of virtue. He did not hesitate, moreover, to promote his projects by a *caramba* to the noble, and by a sly hit at the poor. The people, with their instinctive perspicacity, knew well that the worthy monk was on the right path, so

they loved and venerated Father Nolasco, though occasionally they laughed at him.

We must here venture to make an observation on this point. There are two very distinct, or rather opposite styles of laughter. The benevolent, and the sardonic. The former is mild, gay, and inoffensive: the latter is bitter, biting, and cynical. The first emanates from an honest heart, and resembles the gay bubbling of a fountain of pure water; the other springs from a hard, callous heart; it penetrates like those corrosive poisons which burn and blacken everything they touch; the one is crowned with flowers, the other is clothed with thorns. It is needless to say that the laughter inspired by the words and deeds of the good Father, was of the benevolent kind.

Father Nolasco was rather deaf; consequently, he frequently misunderstood what was told him, and thus his exhortations at the Confessional served two purposes, as a reproof to the penitent at the moment, and as a sermon for possible sins yet to be committed. It was impossible to find a man more devoid of malignity; but he had, nevertheless, a fair proportion of fun and

humour, and was far from being the dupe of those who tried to impose on him. No one was more candid and truthful, and though never assuming a tone of superiority, he knew how to point out to each what appeared to him wrong or blameable, and yet so that no one was offended.

In appearance, Father Nolasco resembled one of those figures made of gutta percha, stretched out to its utmost extent. His head was long and narrow, his nose and his chin long, his teeth and his hands and arms long, his legs and feet the same. After quitting his convent, thanks to the generosity of a patron from America, named Don Marcellino Toro, he wore a suit of black stuff, which, by dint of being constantly worn by him and well brushed by his kind hostess, had acquired a degree of shining lustre, giving it much the appearance of black sticking-plaster. Though Father Nolasco was upwards of sixty, he was active, and, with the exception of a tendency to shortness of breath, which he corrected by drinking quantities of tea, he enjoyed excellent health, owing no doubt to the frugality and simplicity of his mode of living. The sister of his protector, Doña

Braulia Toro, made him a present every month of two pounds of chocolate, which, along with some cold meat, formed his breakfast. His rich neighbour, Gil Piñones, bestowed some dried peas on him, because he taught his sons to serve mass. These peas, and some ounces of meat and bacon, sent to him by those for whom he wrote letters, furnished the soup that nourished him for 365 days in the year. He reserved a cup of *bouillon* from it for his supper, and gave the remainder to the poor widow who inhabited the garret. He spoke with the confidential *thou*, even to those who were born in this enlightened century. One day, a young physician, who gave himself considerable airs of importance, observed to him that such familiarity was an offence against the dignity of man.

"The dignity of man!" replied Father Nolasco. "A novel idea! Dignity in words, indignity in actions! What! am I to address my spiritual father, Saint Francisco, as *thou*, and call such a poor creature as you, your grace, and your lordship! No, no! go and cure malignant fevers, and don't talk to me. I don't care to be in the

fashion. Such crusts are too hard for my old teeth!"

The most determined antagonist of the worthy priest was the son of the poor widow, a fine boy of twelve years of age, lively, good-tempered, full of merry mischief, determined to be a sailor, contrary to the wish of his mother; having lost her husband by shipwreck, she trembled at the thoughts of her son going to sea, and she begged Father Nolasco to lend his aid to dissuade the child from his project; but all in vain. The more the worthy priest lauded the advantages of dry land, and the pleasures of rural life, the more the spirited boy dwelt on the delights of long voyages on the inconstant waves, and all the exciting perils of the sea. Father Nolasco, in revenge, had named him *Montévideo*, and we know that for some people every long sea voyage is supposed to extend to America, and yet *Montévideo* is their *Finistère*.

"You shall not go to sea," said the worthy man.

"And why not?" answered Tomasillo, with a smile peculiar to him and his sister, displaying mingled gaiety and gentleness,

just as in the sun light and brilliancy are united.

"Because the ocean is the enemy of man, and you know it to be so. It caused your father's death, and I cannot understand, you headstrong boy, how you have the heart to think of embarking on it."

"And your father, sir, where did he die?" asked Tomasillo.

"In his bed, my son, in peace and quiet," answered Nolasco.

"Then how can your reverence have the heart ever to go to bed?"

"Don't crow so loud, my young game cock. You well know, Tomasillo, that out of ten who go to sea, there are nine who are drowned in the flower of their age, and who die without confession; and you, who are even worse than most lads, are the more likely to encounter this fate. If you leave the land for the sea, it will be your own loss, for to others it is of no consequence. I say your own, but I must add your poor mother's also, who cannot fail to love you, such as you are, as she brought you into this world, where it is your duty to support her."

"What does your reverence wish me to

do? to go, as I did the beginning of the season, into Mateo's corn fields, with a tin pan to frighten away little birds?"

"Well, there is no danger, at all events, in that!"

"But I like danger, Father Nolasco."

"Hold your saucy tongue, you little flying fish! he who loves danger is sure to perish by it. I have spoken to my friend, Gil Piñones, who has promised to take you as his swineherd."

"I won't go! I won't go! Why should I keep swine? their master may look after them himself!"

"Then you are resolved not to work, you young robber? you don't choose to become a respectable man and to help your poor mother, foolish boy?"

"Yes, yes, your reverence! but I will not be a clod hopper, or pass my life at home, like a snail. I don't choose to be called a *Tomata*! no, indeed!"

"Do you prefer being called Monté-video? We shall see whether you don't go to my friend Gil Piñones's farm! I will take you there myself, and if you refuse, I will drag you by the ear! Come, I think I have done my best, and taken plenty of

trouble! Do you think, you tiresome boy, it would have been so easy for you to become Gil Piñones's swineherd? You shall go and settle the matter this very moment, and to-morrow morning at dawn of day begin your duties in the fields."

Next morning the boy ran away and took refuge in a ship, which no one could persuade him to leave. As he was obliging, well disposed, and handy, he pleased the master of the vessel, who agreed to engage him, and shortly after raised him to the dignity of *Cuarterero*—a name bestowed on those children whose apprenticeship is finished, and who gain the *quarter* of what a man gains.

"Montévideo!" said Father Nolasco, when he returned; "you are like the fir cones of Rapita, you hammer away at them for seven years incessantly, to try to get something out of them, and the first seed that starts from the husk, puts out your eye!"

"Father Nolasco," replied Tomasillo, "three things form a man—knowledge, the sea, and the King's court!"

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER supper, all the inhabitants of the house assembled before the door, except the poor widow, who was confined to her garret by her toils and her sufferings. On a bench to the right was seated Father Nolasco, Canuto, who was not on guard this evening, and Mateo, whose little grandson was leaning on his knees and resting both arms on him.

On the bench to the left, was Estevan, the eldest of the two lads we saw returning with their father from the fields—he was twenty—and his brother Lorenzo eighteen; beside them was Maria Dolorès, the pretty daughter of the poor widow, whom they both loved as dearly as a sister.

“A fine boy that Tomasillo,” said Mateo; “he is as merry as a fandango; he

goes to bed early, and gets up in the morning singing like the birds!"

"So he does," answered Melchiora; "and Maria Dolorès, what an angel she is! she lies down and rises, like seraphins singing praises to God!"

Dolorès was fourteen years old; an age at which childhood and youth contract so close a union, that often years as they pass, must call in the aid of tears in order to separate them.

Melchiora was seated on the door step, with her grandchild's little head reposing on her lap, but still holding fast a bunch of grapes in her hand, though she had dropped sound asleep, like a little Bacchante.

Pepa, the coastguard's wife, and Catherine, the mother of the children, who were great friends, had brought out two low chairs, and were seated near each other. Catherine had the baby, whom she was nursing, in her arms.

"I think it is going to rain," said Canuto; "the wind is rising, and at this season whenever the wind blows from the east, we have wet weather. What do you think, Mateo?"

"You are not far wrong," answered he; "when the sun goes down behind a bank of clouds, it denotes a change of weather."

"Will you come with me, Lorenzo?" said Estevan to his brother, of whom he was very fond; "the lads have got a guitar, and are going to dance."

"No; I mean to stay here!" said Lorenzo, who was not in a good humour.

"Well, stay away then," replied Estevan; "the least thing makes you cross! don't come, if you don't choose! One would suppose some person was always in your debt, and never paid you. Have you any pain anywhere?"

"Yes, in my head, with hearing you talk!"

"Then, my good fellow, good bye! when a tooth aches, you must either have it pulled, or submit to suffer from it!" and Estevan went away.

"Why won't you go?" asked Dolorès.

"Because I prefer staying here."

"Why?"

"I know why."

"Well, if I could go where there was a guitar, I am sure I should not stay here!"

"Not if you had been ploughing all day long?"

"Nonsense, you lazy creature! have not the others done quite as much as you? Have you no sweetheart, Lorenzo?"

"I? No!" said the young man, gruffly, adding, after a moment, "I can tell you, Dolorès, and I wish you to know it distinctly from this moment, that when I do fall in love, it shall be with you; and so long as God spares my life, I never intend to love anyone but you!"

Maria Dolorès burst out into a peal of laughter.

"Why do you laugh?" asked Lorenzo, indignantly.

"Why should I not laugh? You my lover! what a droll idea!"

"Not so droll; and if I take it into my head to be your lover, I will importune you so constantly, that you will no longer laugh like a crazy creature!"

"I won't have you for a lover!" said Dolorès, resolutely.

"No? We shall see! I will be your lover for all that, whether you like it or not!"

"No!"

"Yes!"

"I tell you no, no!"

"And I say yes, yes!"

"I won't have you! I will not!" said the young girl, half crying.

At this moment, a clear and joyous voice was heard singing.

"It is Tomasillo!" said Dolorès, gaily running to meet the singer.

"Good evening, all!" said Tomasillo, who was carrying a basket of fish.

"Welcome, my son!"

"Melchiora," said the boy, distributing his fish; "here are some prawns for you, I know you like to make soup of them. Pepa, here are some salmon trout. Father Nolasco, take all this small fry for your supper."

"So! you are come back, Montévideo," said Father Nolasco, "how quick you have been; you travel as speedily as bad news! What do you say?"

"I say, father," cried Tomasillo, "that you are to have these little fish for supper!"

"No, no! I want nothing but my usual soup; at my age, meat soup is more wholesome than fish."

"Many thanks, my good Tomasillo, all the same!" said Melchiora.

"Thank you also," added Pepa.

"Oh, it's not worth while!" replied the lad; "I would gladly give you something much better if I had it."

"Have you been far, Tomasillo?" asked Catherine.

"All the way to Gibraltar, the country of the English."

"How! have you been in England?" asked Catherine.

"No; it is a large rock in Spain, which belongs to the English: is not that the fact, Father Nonasco?"

"My boy!" said Melchiora, "you must not say Nonasco, but Nolasco—I have told you so at least twenty times!"

"But they say Nonasco in Cadiz, and they are knowing enough; is it not so Señor Canuto?"

The grave and silent Canuto, obliged to respond to this direct appeal, answered in a hollow voice, "They don't say Nonasco!"

"There, you see!"

"But they don't say Nolasco!"

"There, *you* see!"

"They say Nonato."

"But," said Melchiora, "St. Raymond is called thus."

"Because they both chance to have the same name," said Canuto, with decision.

"What Canuto says must be true, for he knows more than Seneca ever did."

"Seneca? pray who is Seneca?" said Tomasillo.

"Rebecca?" asked Nolasco, who was rather deaf. "She was a shepherdess of Bethlehem."

"I am not asking about her," said the lad. "Who is Seneca—*Se-ne-ca*?"

"I don't know," replied the good priest; "the name is neither in the breviary nor in the martyrology."

"Canuto," said Tomasillo, repeating his question, "I hope you will be so good, sir, as to tell me who Seneca was, for I am curious to know?"

"Seneca," replied the coastguard, with the utmost gravity, "is a sage among the Moors, who advises and directs his king just as the Pope does in our country."

"Oh, really! well I did not know that before," said his wife; "and yet I have

often heard that the Moors were very learned men."

"How can they be clever," said Mateo, "when they shut up their women? No great sense in that—eh, Father Nolasco?"

"Perhaps," replied Nolasco; "a good woman should stay at home. But nowadays they are more anxious to escape from their own hearths than smoke, which is always seeking a vent to make its way out."

"By the bye, young Cuartero," said Mateo, "did you see a syren in any of your voyages?"

"I?—no. What you allude to is only a large sea dog, or a mammifer."

"No, no," said Melchiora; "the syren is a bold girl, who frequents the beach, inspiring love in the sailors by her handsome face and her songs; but one day her father cursed her, and wished that she might be changed into a fish—and she was transformed into one, from below her waist; then quite ashamed, she cast herself into the sea, and floated away on the waves, where she continued to sing just as she used to do on shore, to entice men to their

ruin. So you did not know, Tomasillo, that when the dolphins jump and the syrens sing, it is the sign of a tempest and the presage of a shipwreck?"

"No, Melchiora, I never heard anything but the hard breathing of the conger eels; the syren you talk of, is no doubt a fish belonging to other seas. And now I must go and see my mother, to tell her that I am going to embark as midshipman, in a frigate as large as the Château."

"Boy! why, where are you going to?" asked they, all eagerly.

"To the furthest part of America."

"Oh, goodness!" exclaimed they, in chorus.

"What are you all talking about?" said Father Nolasco.

Mateo repeated what Tomasillo had said.

"Did I not foresee it?" replied the worthy ecclesiastic. To India, Montévideo? This young scamp, who is as giddy as a carnival, never rested till he succeeded. You see he refuses to be swineherd to Gil Piñones, only to serve as food for the fishes himself. Is it credible?"

"To leave our mother earth, for such a stepmother as the sea!" said Melchiora.

"After all, no money is to be got by staying idly at home; and I wish to make a lot of money, and quickly too, that my poor mother may enjoy a tranquil old age."

"Tomasillo," said Mateo, "he who wishes to be rich in a year, is sure to be hanged at the end of six months."

"My dear brother," said Dolorès, weeping, "my own darling, don't go to those distant seas which are the graves of Christians."

"Hush, hush! Dolorsilla; I will come back like Marcelino, with a quantity of gold. I will bring my mother a chest of sugar for her syrup, a parrot for you, and a little black boy for Father Nolasco, to serve him at mass."

"I don't want your negro boys," said Father Nolasco; "and remember that he who seeks danger is sure to perish. But advice is all lost on you."

"Father Nolasco, glory and money only come to those who try for them."

"And supposing you lose both life and

health in search of them, and never return?"

"I will certainly return, and in good health, and with lots of heavy gold pieces—the most healthy of all things!" replied the little Cuartero, going in to see his mother.

CHAPTER V.

Nothing could stop this determined and enterprising lad ; neither the remarks of his friends, nor the prayers and tears of his mother and sister. "Those who are afraid, ought never to cross the sea," said he. So Thomas set off. No words could describe the affliction of his poor mother. Her life, divided between grief for the past, and anguish for the present, was gradually decaying, like the oak which is simultaneously struck by lightning, and gnawed by insects. Thus passed a whole year.

One day an old pilot, a friend of her husband's, entered the garret of the poor widow. This man brought her a letter, dictated by Thomas, and dated from Montévideo.

The boy was as merry as ever. He said that his voyage had been smooth enough to please a lady, that he was as much at home as a fish in the water, that he had grown several inches, and that he intended to return with the same ship, and the same captain, who was very kind to him. From that moment the widow never allowed a single day to pass, without going down to the beach and gazing far away over the immense azure desert, where she hoped to see, like a ring of pearls encircling a brilliant, the ship which contained her son. Her neighbours tried to dissuade her from these useless journeys, serving only still further to debilitate her weak health, but it was in vain. When reality refuses us happiness, the heart clings to illusions, and will not give them up, and lives only through them. But the days passed by, and the waves and the clouds, but Thomas did not return.

It was an evening in the Equinox; the bright and burning summer was departing, leaving the ground dry and arid; cold and severe winter was preparing to rush over the earth with its hurricanes, and to fertilize it by its torrents of rain. Its ap-

proach was proclaimed by that uneasy commotion in the elements, which everywhere causes disquietude, even in human hearts.

Happy is the family, who, in these long, turbulent, winter evenings, find themselves all assembled round the light of the lamp, and who, after having returned thanks to God for the happiness they enjoy, fold their hands and pray for those who suffer, or who are in peril.

Such was not the fate of this unhappy widow. The son whom she adored was at sea; every loud gust of east wind brought tears from her eyes, like the last leaves from the trees; raising floods of anguish in her heart, just as it raised mountainous billows from the depths of the ocean. The night had passed in this state of frightful anxiety; in the morning the widow was totally unable to leave her bed. Her daughter, after giving her the bowl of soup that Father Nolasco kept for her from his breakfast every morning, went to sift corn in the house of a rich baker's widow.

Scarcely did the poor woman find herself alone, than her anguish of mind permitting her no rest, she got up and went to the sea beach.

Who has not contemplated with mingled terror and admiration, the magnificent spectacle of the ocean, when the winds and the swelling tide rush on the beach, its huge, angry billows coming violently in contact? Who has not thought that he saw the wrath of the sea surging in the surf of its tumultuous waves, and heard it roaring in its depths, like an angry, savage beast of prey? Who has not trembled in considering the effects of this mighty power, which nothing on this earth can resist? Who, in gazing at the waves rolling and dying away on the shore, followed instantly by others still more threatening, has not thought of the fabulous hydra, whom no assaults can subdue, and whose innumerable heads were not diminished by any victory? The horizon seemed bounded by a wall of rain, which struggling against the wind, formed oblique lines, behind which disappeared Cadiz and its lighthouse, as if the strong hand of the storm desired to efface them from the great map of the world. The heavy clouds no longer preserved their light course, or their aerial forms, but fell in rain rapidly, like everything that descends.

The poor widow stopped short on the shore, staggered by the storm which flattened her dress, revealing the outlines of her wasted figure. She gazed at the sea, and saw nothing but this great convulsion of nature, during which every living thing had disappeared, as if swept away by the hurricane. The feeble woman tried to resist it, borrowing her last strength from maternal love, and stood motionless, thinking that she could discern on each foaming crest, that crowned the waves, the white sails of a ship seeking the harbour.

CHAPTER VI.

THAT evening Canuto entered his own house with his usual dignified demeanour. His wife had gone out, and he seated himself with a very disturbed air. He rose and walked a few steps, stopped short and scratched his ear, uttering a kind of impatient grunt.

"What is the matter, Canuto?" asked Melchiora.

"I am distressed—much distressed," replied he.

"What is it? Good Heavens! You are not a man to be agitated by trifles."

"No; but I found a dead woman on the beach."

"What—killed?"

"No; legitimately dead—a natural death. But this is not the worst part of the

matter, for this woman is your neighbour —Thomase."

"Holy Virgin! Canuto, what is it you tell me?"

"The truth without any prevarication, Melchiora—it is just as I told you; but I must go and make my report."

"That is of no great consequence," said Melchiora, crying.

"No! but I can tell you it is of great consequence. You probably think that a report is as easy as frying a fritter!—and Pepa not at home, too! I thought as much," added he, seeing all the family and the neighbours collected, and hearing their lamentations. "How can any one write a report in this tumult? I seldom speak at all, but whenever I do I always regret it. Could not I have had the sense to hold my tongue, talking fool? I ought to have known, that in the mouth of the discreet man, what is public ought to remain secret!" Fortunately his wife arrived at this moment; he asked her for the key of his room, and shut himself up to write his report.

"It is a blessing of Providence for the poor woman," said Melchiora, "to have

ceased to suffer; and as she was both a saint and a martyr, she has no doubt found a good place in heaven!"

"You are quite right, Melchiora, for philosophers say, that the punishment inflicted by God on Cain was never to die! Some say that he is underground, others that he is hanging on the horns of the moon—the truth is, that he cannot die! Death has been a benefit to poor Thomas!"

"The departure of her son was her death blow," said Catherine; "the person who claims our pity most is her poor daughter."

"Pepa," said a neighbour, "you who love her so dearly, and have no children of your own, might easily adopt her."

This good and charitable thought had already dawned in the heart of the excellent woman; but not venturing to form a resolution of herself, and not wishing to express her benevolent intentions, for fear that if her project failed her husband might be blamed, she replied, "I will assist her by every means in my power, but as to taking care of other people's children, that is the mission of great people. It is the more obligatory from being voluntary, and,

as the proverb says, 'He cherishes a fire-brand who adopts the child of another.'"

"Who has announced the death of her mother to poor Dolorès?" said Catherine.

"Father Nolasco will tell her when he comes back from church," replied Melchiora. "We always rely on these good priests in distressing circumstances, and they never fail us."

Pepa went to her room, and found her husband there, terminating the report he had written so laboriously, and then he went out, to send off an express to the Judge of Port Sainte Marie, with which Rota is connected.

"Do you know what we were saying?" said the excellent old Melchiora, on seeing him—"that God will send a support to this poor child, who is left an orphan and forsaken, and that you might possibly be this support, as Pepa is so fond of poor Dolorès."

"What did Pepa say about it?" asked the coastguard.

"She said, that taking charge of other people's children was a burden that ought to be reserved for the rich, but that if you chose....."

"I choose!" exclaimed he, opening his eyes very wide; "have I inherited from any millionaire, that I should adopt children, like the Queen? Really, Melchiora, you have some very odd notions!" so saying, the indignant man went away, looking very sour.

"Alas! Canuto, the poor woman then was no longer breathing when you found her?" asked Pepa, when her husband returned.

"She was as completely dead as if she had been three days on the seashore, and the rising tide was already wetting her feet."

"Poor woman!—poor unhappy creature! if she could only have seen you before she died—you, who had always such a friendly feeling towards her!"

"True, wife!"

"If you could at least have consoled her last moments, by saying to her, 'Die in peace! I will take charge of your daughter, and I will tell Pepa to be kind to poor Dolorès!'"

"You speak with very proper feeling," answered her husband, whose austere air

had given place to emotion, as soon as he saw his wife crying.

"What a sad pity my poor husband, that you had no time to accomplish a good work so congenial to your generous heart."

"But, Pepa, didn't you say to Melchiora, that adopting other people's children was the affair of *grandees*?"

"Yes, and I don't retract what I said; but I did not say that I shrunk from such a charge; and I do not forget that godly maxim, 'Help one another.' And now I go further, and say that it would make me very happy if you did this good work, for you know that I have always wished for a daughter, and probably God has never granted my prayer because He reserved this poor child for us."

"Well, I do think that it would be a very charitable action, Pepa, and there is plenty of time to arrange it. We cannot do better, and she will assist you, and enable you to take a little rest."

"Don't do it on that account, Canuto, but through Christian charity. To do good is to work for oneself. If I were in your place, I would see that the poor drowned woman was conveyed to the church, where

she will at least be received with some respect, and some candles, for the poor woman has no one belonging to her to think of these things."

The coastguard resumed his oilskin hat, and going into the court, said, with emphasis, to Melchiora, "I intend to adopt the little girl, Dolorès; God has said, 'Help one another,' and the child will be useful to Pepa."

"But I thought she did not wish it?" said the good woman, surprised.

"I am master in my own house, Melchiora, and my wife has no will but mine. I beg you will understand this, once for all." Having said this, Canuto went along pompously in the step of the royal guard.

At this moment Father Nolasco arrived, to whom all that had occurred was minutely detailed. He possessed the gift of imperturbability, so useful to surgeons in the presence of physical suffering, and equally so to priests in witnessing sorrows of the soul. In men of superior intellect, this impassibility arises from great strength and elevation of soul. Among the common herd, it springs from long experience in their sad mission; but it is of inappreciable

value to both, and produces the happiest results.

"It is the will of God!" said the good priest, when he had heard all particulars. "You to-day, me to-morrow—we must all eventually follow the same path. The real misfortune is not her death, but that she departed without the sacraments, like a Barbary Moor. But the poor unfortunate creature was good and pious, and she will never go where the wicked are sent, that is very certain!"

Dolorès' step was heard at this moment; she was returning from the baker's, where she had been sifting corn, and singing gaily as she approached the house.

"Good evening," said she; "your hand, Father Nolasco;" then looking up, she saw the door of the garret shut. "Is my mother gone out?" said she, and the startled child then perceived that all the women round her were weeping, and no one answered her. "What is the matter?" asked she, in a choked voice. No one spoke. It was easy to see that the rush of blood to her heart stopped its pulsation, and suffocated her. "My mother! my mother! where is my mother?" cried she, at last.

"Your mother, my poor child, is where we would gladly be," said Father Nolasco. "What has happened is irremediable, and all we can now do is to recommend her to God, as one of his pious daughters and a good Christian; any other feeling would be contrary to the holy submission which is our duty."

Dolorès uttered a sharp cry, and rushed to the stair. Catherine and Pepa followed her, and seizing her arm, said, "She is not there, my child—she is not there!"

"Not there?" said the poor orphan, in a distracted tone; "not there?—oh! where is she, then?"

"She is in the church."

The girl disengaged herself from the hands which were holding her, and darted to the door of the street. Catherine and Pepa ran after her.

"Don't stop me—don't detain me," cried the poor girl, struggling with them; "I must see her—I must see my darling mother."

"Don't go there—I forbid you to do so—I, who am your confessor," said Father Nolasco, going up to her. "Do you wish to cause a mob, and bring a scandal on the

church? What good can you do by going? Come, my child, be calm; we must all die, and death has no terrors except for the wicked."

Dolorès threw herself into the arms of Pepa and Catherine, crying and sobbing bitterly, and the two women carried her to Pepa's bed.

Mateo and his sons soon returned from the fields, Melchiora having sent for them; they were in great consternation. Dolorès on the bed where she lay, was uttering the most heartrending lamentations. "I will go to my mother! I must see her! If they bury her, I shall never see her again! Who has the right to prevent my going to her? My mother is alone, all alone in the church, with no sounds but the wind shaking the windows, with no one to watch beside her but the owl in the belfry! Mother!—mother!—oh! let me see her!"

"Don't lament in this way, Dolorès, I will go and watch beside her," said Lorenzo.

"And I, too," said Estevan.

"May God and the Blessed Virgin, and all the saints in Paradise, reward you for this holy and charitable work," said Dolorès, shedding a fresh torrent of tears; then her

despair seemed in some degree mitigated, and she fell back motionless, with her eyes closed, on the bed.

At the end of a quarter of an hour she started up suddenly, and pressing her two hands on her heart, she groaned heavily, "What is to become of me?" said she.

"Where I go, you shall go also," said Pepa, tenderly embracing her, "we will never part. If you have lost a mother, you shall find me one in her place, my child."

Dolorès threw herself into Pepa's arms, with an impulse of ardent gratitude, which she could only express by tears.

CHAPTER VII.

It was midnight. The profound silence that reigned in the village, was only interrupted by the hollow and abrupt sounds of the sea waves, which the rising tide was rolling rapidly in on the rocks and pebbles. The cold and pale light of the moon was shed around, like the soft echo of a distant sound, and the village might have been likened to a clock that has stopped, if the cock had not from time to time sent forth its shrill cries, like the warning shout of a sentinel to his comrades.

A young man was standing in the court of Mateo's house under a window, from behind which the face of a pretty young girl was seen. The light of the moon which shone on this fair face, displayed the grave expression of sadness which pervaded it.

This serious and thoughtful look, suggested the image of meditation, thinking at once of a melancholy past, and a melancholy future.

The young man, on the contrary, had the calm yet energetic physiognomy of the man of action, the ardent and fixed glance of the man of strong passions, the proud bearing of a man yet undaunted, who is moved by nothing, and who defies all obstacles with austere arrogance.

"Did I not foresee it long ago? did I not predict that you would one day marry me?" said he; "what I wish, I invariably accomplish by the strength of my will; your laughing at me and resisting, was no use."

"I was a child then," said she.

"Then? It seems a perfect age—and yet it is only three years!"

"I do not know how long it is. I only know that I am no longer a child, and that since that time you performed an action that gained my heart, and which would have made me bestow a hundred hearts on you if I had them."

"I don't wish you to love me through gratitude, Dolorès; such love resembles a

debt that must be paid, and not a gift freely conferred."

"If the water you drink slakes your thirst, what need you care from what source it springs?"

"It does signify that I should know it, in order to judge of the quality."

"The quality is good, Lorenzo."

"That is yet to be seen, for it has never been tried. I can't help it, but I do not believe that you love me."

"Why? you tiresome creature!"

"Because you are always so sad, a proof that my love does not suffice to make you happy."

"Listen to me, Lorenzo; a love that absorbs all other feelings, is not of the right quality. A heart devoid of memory, cannot be faithful in love."

"Do you call that love of right quality then, which neglects the present, and only thinks of the past? Dolorès! you only live with your regrets, and if you loved me, you would be solely occupied in looking forward to the future, with hope."

"Would that I could efface from my memory, the image constantly present there! that of my dearest mother, alone and

forsaken, expiring on the cold seashore, hearing nothing but the tumult of the waves, every instant coming closer to her, and at last wetting her feet. My poor mother died from terror no doubt, more than from any physical sufferings. And I was not there! I never even saw her, after her death. Those are sharp thorns, Lorenzo, that pierce my heart, and can never be extracted. My darling brother is the only one of my family remaining, and Heaven alone knows whether the sea that did not succeed in engulfing my mother, may not avenge itself on the son, as it did already on the father. How can I be gay, and learn to forget?"

"According to this style of reasoning, as we have all some one to regret, no person should ever cease to mourn."

"True," said Dolorès, sighing.

"Then tell me, why has God made bright colours?"

"For children, and for birds, and flowers, Lorenzo," said the young girl, leaning her head sadly on the latticed window.

"Maria Dolorès!" said Lorenzo, bitterly; "one who loves the dead and the absent so

dearly, has very little affection to bestow on the living."

"You are mistaken, Lorenzo; the same sun which gives life to the cypress, gives it to the rose also. Believe me, your suspicious nature is destined to be the gall, which will poison both your life and mine."

"No one fears suspicions, or remonstrates against them, but those who have cause for self reproach."

"I do not fear them, but I feel ashamed of them, just as an honest man cannot bear the thought of being taken for a smuggler."

"Do you know why? because many without being smugglers themselves, encourage smuggling by partaking of its fruits."

"And do you think me capable of doing so?" asked Dolorès, in a voice of gentle reproach.

"Father Nolasco says that women are untruthful without intending it, and deceive with no other motive than the wish to deceive," said he.

"But he is speaking of wicked women; he would not say so of me."

"Certainly not! how could he say it of you, who are the apple of his eye. He

whose father is an Alcalde, appears before the tribunal with a high head."

"Well, then, if Father Nolasco has faith in me, being neither my lover nor admirer, it shows I am truthful. Will you always be the same, Lorenzo?"

"Always, unless I am born afresh in this world."

"Beware! the habit of nourishing doubts and suspicions in your heart is a malady, and men die of the maladies they encourage."

"And let me tell you this; woman is like the sea, producing nothing but bitterness. You may grasp a woman to-day, but she eludes your hold to-morrow."

"Heaven grant, Lorenzo, that others may endure as patiently as I do, your harsh judgments!"

Bound by profound gratitude, and endowed with a gentle and patient nature, subdued by Lorenzo's tyranny, Dolorès was thus inaugurating an existence, similar to that of many pious mothers and excellent wives among the people. A few days previously, an edict had been published. It was like the stab of a knife to all the inhabitants, and destined to destroy many happy

homes, to cut asunder much domestic affection, and to sink deep into the hearts of many fond mothers. This was the announcement of a military conscription.

Calamity for the rural peasant does not consist in labour, for he seeks it; nor in privation, for he is little affected by it; still less in the number of his children, for he loves them. The drama of his life is the conscription, which has been justly called *the tax of blood*. The hand of the minister that signs this decree, would tremble, if he could know what torrents of bitter tears he is about to cause, how many hearts he is about to rend, how many existences he is ruthlessly about to crush. When will God ordain civilization to cast itself into the arms of Christianity, when these combined influences may decide that men should only take up arms voluntarily, and solely with the view of doing homage to the throne, or strengthening the tribunals of justice.

Melchiora was in a state of the most inconsolable despair, and the most profound grief. Her two sons were drawn at the same time.

Estevan escaped the first time, and his mother felt that capricious fortune would

not grant the same good luck twice. She thought the same with regard to Lorenzo, who himself felt persuaded that his own hand would prove fatal to him. Neither mother nor son were deceived in their presentiments, for destiny was fatal to both brothers.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE baker's wife, to whose house Dolorès went to sift corn, was a young widow. She had a great inclination for Lorenzo, and sought every pretext to go to Melchiora's, and every opportunity to induce Lorenzo to visit her, who however being naturally disdainful, received with harshness and impertinence, all the advances of this rich, pretty, young woman; but she seemed quite impervious to his saucy airs, and only to like him the better for them.

Lorenzo was in her house the evening after the conscription had been drawn. After finishing the affair that had brought him, he was going away without saying a syllable, according to his usual custom, when the widow called him to her.

"So," said she, "you are now a soldier."

"I never expected anything else," said Lorenzo; "fortune frowns on me."

"Perhaps not," replied the widow. "What if some one were to buy you off?"

The young man's heart bounded as if from an electric shock. "Do you know any one who would lend me the money?" said he, anxiously.

"I do indeed," replied she; "in fact, who is ready to give it to you."

At these words Lorenzo, to whom the sentiments of the widow had been long no secret, guessed her intention. His momentary ebullition of joy, subsided as quickly as a light that is extinguished, and his face resumed its usual expression.

"Well, Lorenzo, what do you say? is the proposal so disagreeable as to cause your face to cloud over, like a December sky?"

"You know the maxim, 'Never receive gifts from others, unless you wish to be under obligations to them.'"

"Come, child, don't be so sulky and reserved. Do you wish to be like uncle Miguel, who was ashamed of everything, even of his own goodness? There is a cure for everything in this world, except for

death. If you were less taciturn, we might understand each other. You know that my poor Juan at his death, left me the house, the oven, and the bakehouse. It is as indispensable as food for me, to have a man at the head of all these things—there is little for him to do, and much to gain.”

“I know nothing of baking,” said Lorenzo, ungraciously.

“You are also aware that he left me a large flock.”

“I don’t understand animals.”

“And a solid heap of gold pieces besides. You would find a good stock of ready money.”

“What could I do with it?”

“You would add to the sum.”

“No; such a proposal does not suit me,” said Lorenzo, turning away. “I don’t wish for any responsibilities—no care, no sorrow.”

“Do you know that nothing can be more childish than what you are saying? Have I not told you clearly enough, that, if you choose, all I have shall be yours?”

“I do not wish for wealth that covers a snare,” said he, going away.

“Was there ever so proud a scapegrace!” said the widow, when he was gone.

She was persuaded however that Lorenzo would eventually accept her offer; she thought that if fate proved unfavourable to him, he would never actually bring himself to wear a soldier’s uniform; that he was not a man to like walking in the mud, nor eating out of a tin can.

Everything is repeated with additions and variations in villages as in towns: this opinion of the widow’s at last reached the Lopez family, being amplified on each new edition. Mateo refused to believe a word of it, Melchiora was confounded, and Dolorès in consternation.

“Lorenzo!” cried the poor mother, when the young man came in, “is it true, that the widow is to buy you a substitute?”

“What are you talking about, mother?”

“They say she has given you money to buy you off.”

“Given—given! Mother, the only thing any one gives is, good day.”

“But if not given, at all events it is lent.”

“Patience alone is lent.”

"Did you not choose to accept the offer, then, Lorenzo?"

"I, mother? Am I like those poor souls in purgatory, forced to wait for gifts?"

"He was quite right not to accept a loan," said the father. "He is a good workman, every one likes him, and is glad to employ him; but Heaven knows when he might have been able to repay such a sum—a pig bought on credit, grunts all his life."

"Lorenzo, my son," said his mother, "it is said, too, that she wished to marry you, and that you refused?"

"Who told you that? You know, mother, it is not the province of the man to say, no. No, is a privileged word, reserved for the woman. Why do people wish to compromise the widow?"

"No one compromises her, my son; no one said any harm of her."

"No! they don't knock her down, but they calumniate her. Oh! envy, envy! Because she is rich and pretty, others are malicious and spiteful about her!"

Lorenzo was seated on a bench apart, while the whole family assembled before the door, were deploring the departure of

the two brothers. He perceived the painful impression produced on Dolorès by what had been said of the rich widow, and, leaning his head against the wall, and his eyes raised to the sky, he seemed to address to the stars a song, which was directly intended for the young girl. He was singing softly, but distinctly, and with that admirable flexibility, and perfect modulation, which the delicate and singular popular melodies so peculiarly demand. Dolorès did not lose a syllable of the words of the tender love song, which reached at once her ear and her heart.

While Lorenzo was singing, the other conscripts, more gay, or at least less sad, were drinking, in order to drown or conceal their sorrow, or were staggering about the streets of the village, shouting.

Lorenzo said to Dolorès, in a sad and trembling voice,

“I knew fate would hit me. You are happy now, I suppose?”

“May Heaven forgive you!” replied Dolorès, weeping. “You seem to take a pleasure, Lorenzo, in making me feel your absence more bitterly.”

“Will you forget me, Dolorès?”

"No! not even if you forget me."

"You know that will never be."

"Quite as easily on your part as on mine."

"Why?"

"Because you have not like me a remembrance, to which you can erect an altar in your heart as in mine."

"And this is precisely why I cannot trust your love; it is more like the love of a daughter, than that of a betrothed bride."

"Do not make such nice distinctions: the affection inspired by the memory of a mother cannot be cold; it is more holy and durable than that which springs to life amid the sounds of a guitar."

"Then swear to retain your affection for me."

"I do swear it solemnly."

"By what?"

"By the soul of my mother. But why such distrust?"

"Because my heart forebodes that you will forget me."

"Your heart is your tormentor, Lorenzo."

"Because it is quick of perception; but you must swear something else."

"What?"

“That you will not leave this place, nor my mother, not even if Pepa goes away.”

“Certainly—I swear it.”

“Now, I warn you of one thing; if you desert me for another, that man when I return shall eat bread no more—he shall die by my hand.”

“No threats, Lorenzo—they are not right.”

“I do not threaten, I only warn you.”

“I shall not do from fear what I would not do from love, Lorenzo. If you are distrustful, doubt the love that you threaten, but rely on that you fondly seek; act with regard to it as the bee does with its honey, and do not rend it in pieces as the wolf does his prey; leave me, at the hour of parting, some happy memories to console me during your absence, free from gall and bitterness.”

CHAPTER IX.

A YEAR elapsed, and, in Mateo's house, each day made them feel the absence of their sons more cruelly. The father was now old, and being left alone, could no longer cultivate the whole of his heritage. The kind and pleasant eyes of Melchiora were dimmed by tears, and saddened by the expression of never ceasing regret. The house had lost that air of tranquil happiness which had given it such a joyous appearance.

A fresh change was about to occur, and every revolution in these quiet, monotonous lives is like a sudden hurricane in a placid sky. Canuto was appointed to Seville, and he was going away immediately. This was a sorrow to all, but a peculiar grief for Dolorès, as she was so distressed at being

separated from Pepa, that excellent woman, who had shown her so much kindness, and Lorenzo's last words prohibited her from leaving the village. She could not even quit the Lopez family, who were in absolute poverty, from the absence of the two brothers. Pepa wished to take Dolorès with her, but Melchiora insisted on keeping her. The latter loved Dolorès with that lively tenderness which all mothers feel towards those who love their sons, finding in her heart a faithful echo of her anxieties and her affection. Poor Dolorès was obliged to refuse the entreaties of both.

It is possible that some people may regard as a fancy picture, the recital of this positive contention in generosity between two poor families, about adopting an orphan. We would invite those who do not believe us, to visit our villages; they will not find there any foundling hospitals; they will not hear of any infanticides, and they may take information as to what becomes of orphans. They will ascertain that there is no lack of these unfortunate creatures, in a country where usually the life of man is short, because exposed to vicissitudes unknown in the north.

Dolorès supplicated the advice of Father Nolasco. If the worthy old soul knew nothing of Seneca, and if he did not give him a place in his array of saints, he had at least considerable experience in the human heart, in the science of human passions, and in the customs of his rural flock. With his sound reason and simple expedients, he knew how to smooth difficulties better than many who were very scientific, and made great efforts. Without perplexing his brains, which was very contrary to his usual habits, Father Nolasco proposed to Dolorès a mode of surmounting her difficulty.

"Listen to me, my child," said he. "Doña Braulia asked me to get her a young servant girl. She wishes to have a neat, well conducted, hard working young woman, in short a person whom I approve of. Take this situation; you know them to be worthy people; you need not in that case leave this, nor be a burden to any one, and you will get twenty reals a month. At the end of the year you will have a sum of 240 reals, and you will have something to buy your wedding clothes with, when Lorenzo returns. If your madcap brother

had taken service as a swineherd with Gil Piñones when I wished him to do so, he would not at this moment be tossing about on distant seas. The scapegrace! It was no use trying to teach him anything, for when he once said *it shall be so*, all reasoning was fruitless; and yet he was gentle as a lamb, merry as a cricket, and as clean and bright as a new real—but as obstinate as a Gallician mule.”

Dolorès agreed to the proposal of the good old Father, though she so severely felt parting from Pepa, who, however grieved, could not object to this good resolution, and to the motives which led to it.

Doña Braulia Toro was a good woman, very commonplace, very short, and very merry; but she lost this latter good quality from the day when she inherited from her brother, Don Marcelino Toro. Instead of her natural gaiety, she adopted pretensions to refinement, which embittered her life. She endeavoured to compress her good fat sides, sent by the will of Providence, in a corset she sent for from Cadiz; and her frank, open manners into a certain mincing affectation. These ridiculous pretensions

deprived her demeanour (just as the corset did her shape) of all the jovial air peculiar to her originally.

On the other hand, Rosa, her only daughter, fourteen years of age, was a true child of Andalusia—frank, lively, acute, mischievous, and sincere. No exterior could be more entirely in harmony with the character and age of the person. Her face was round and smiling; her fresh lips, always in motion, displayed a row of white teeth, every time that she opened them to speak, to sing, or to laugh; her fine eyes shot forth glances, sometimes mocking, sometimes merry, not unfrequently despotic—derisive without being malignant, and innocent without being silly. Her charming head, always in motion, and decorated with flowers; her impetuous movements; her natural petulance; and, to sum up all, a good heart and right instincts, formed altogether a combination so graceful and so fascinating, that every one was irresistibly impelled to love her, just as we involuntarily feel the agreeable influence of a fresh, capricious breeze.

Rosa's sentiment was that gaiety, nature, and frankness were the only possible state

of any human being; she knew nothing of tears, and could not comprehend sorrow or sadness. She was afraid of serious people, beginning with her mother, since she had become consequential and airified. She would have run away to the uttermost ends of the earth from sorrowful people. She had never thought of the same thing for two minutes consecutively; reflexion was too heavy a burden for a head that had never carried anything but flowers. Educated by her mother, without any restraint, she had both the advantages and the disadvantages of this style of tuition. It would have been as impossible to inculcate a serious idea into her untaught mind, as to implant a bad sentiment in her immaculate heart. Rosa fluttered in the paths of life just as she did in the alleys of her garden—she expected from both the tribute of flowers, her mission was to adorn herself with them.

Rosa cherished two great desires. One was of long standing. To possess a doll which could open and shut its eyes; the other, a more recent one, was to have a lover, who would furnish her with the intense delight of having a secret from her

mother, and talking to him from the window like those girls she had often seen. If the two wishes had been accomplished, the doll, who could open and shut its eyes, would have been a formidable rival to the lover, and would have succeeded in making Rosa miss her assignation more than any maternal authority.

By the time her mother wished to give her masters, it was too late, it being utterly impossible to teach her the alphabet, or to make a straight stroke.

"How can you wish me," said she to her mother, "at my age, to say like the little children at school, *b, a—ba, b, e—be?* I don't know my alphabet, but if you will promise not to give me a master, I will learn it myself to-morrow. I don't choose other young girls to make fun of me."

"A nice child you are—a pretty, precocious young lady to be sure!" said her mother. "Knowledge is the privilege of distinguished people—it is a capital!" But the girl only laughed and ran off.

Doña Braulia had prevailed on Father Nolasco to intervene in this conflict, but with no better result.

"Every age is good to learn," said the

worthy man. "Your uncle did not begin to learn to paint till he was fifty, and he became a prodigy."

"And why did you not learn to paint also?"

"The rich alone can learn to paint, but all may learn to read; and those who know how to read, know everything."

"Really!" replied Rosa. "Yet you, with all your reading, don't know one thing, though it is part of your profession."

"What is it?"

"Why is a consumptive patient like a hermit?"

"What nonsense! Why are they like? They are not the least alike."

"Yes, they resemble each other."

"Do be quiet, child!"

"I say they are like, and you ought to know that better than me, who am neither a priest nor a doctor."

"What are you talking about, foolish child?"

"I say simply, that though you know how to read and write, yet your reverence does not know that the consumptive man and the hermit are like each other, because

neither can expect a *cure*. Do you know it now, Father Nolasco?"

"The linnet has taken wing," said the worthy priest, on Rosa running off and frolicking in the garden.

CHAPTER X.

WE ought to give some account to the reader of Don Marcelino Toro, whose name has appeared several times in the course of this story.

Don Marcelino, who was the son of a merchant of such small degree, that the father and son could not remain together behind the same counter, was sent to America by his father. There he entered a counting house on rather a large scale, in which, after a lapse of years, and by dint of patience and probity, he suddenly returned a millionaire in the eyes of his countrymen, and in reality with twenty-five thousand douros. He revisited his native village in triumph, his coat, moreover, decorated with the stripes that betoken distinction in some government functionaries

unknown to us. They were, however, in the very lowest class of the abundant profusion of embroidery, gold lace, and stripes, conferred on persons who do not bear the smallest analogy to the insignia by which they are embellished.

Signal good fortune, as well as very bad fortune, often passes unperceived in this world. Indeed, it would be difficult to realize the extraordinary run of prosperity which enabled Don Marcelino, who had left his country as poor as Job, to return as rich as Croesus.

He commenced by buying a house worthy of so dignified a personage. The worthy man revelled in show and luxury, acquired by the fruits of his life of toil, but he also cherished an ardent love for his gold pieces. Incited therefore by one passion, and deterred by another, divided between his natural bad taste and a vague desire for elegance, he made the following arrangements: not caring to build, he purchased the handsomest house he could meet with, and soon finding it too small, he bought the adjacent one, and added it to the first. But there was no garden, and Don Marcelino was resolved to have one; it was to be an aris-

tocratic garden, harmonizing with the decorations of its possessor; it must have arbours, statues, a beautiful view, pieces of water filled with gold fish; but, above all, a labyrinth!—a labyrinth was Marcelino's *beau idéal*. He proceeded to buy a third house, with a spacious court contiguous to his own, the walls of which he demolished, and then laid out his garden. He collected in it all we have described, except, indeed, the fine view, which was impossible; but he had it painted on the walls instead. He, therefore, sent to Madrid for a sign painter, with whom, as we shall see, he formed subsequently a nearer connexion. The garden, thanks to jessamine, honeysuckle, trellises, rosetrees, myrtles, and a thousand other nymphs of Flora's court, soon became quite a paradise, in spite of the ridiculous way in which it was laid out. The labyrinth, which only bewildered the moles, became a charming bower of myrtles and creeping plants, forming enchanting little temples on the walls, adorned by pink and yellow flowers, of elegant Grecian forms.

The pond, with its gold fish, encircled with trellis work, became a delicious retreat, filled with cool shade and freshness;

rose bushes and shrubs happily veiled the wooden statues of a distorted Diana and a dwarf Venus, only leaving the tips visible of their very un-Grecian noses.

When the furnishing of the house was in question, Marcelino's first thought was to ask his *protégé*, the sign painter, to do his portrait, in order to perpetuate the memory of his official stripes. The painter transferred to a large piece of canvass the lugubrious visage of Don Marcelino, only making it still more gloomy by sinister black shadows, which, starting from the two corners of his mouth, like moustaches, encroached on his temples like two plasters for headaches, and crept along his nose like a polypus.

But, on the other hand, the artist distinguished himself in the essential parts of the portrait. The Don's left hand reposed on his breast, inserting three fingers, like radishes, into his waistcoat; and on his sleeves, the three decorative stripes shone resplendently. In the other hand, Don Marcelino was holding an open letter, apparently the advertisement of a bull fight, but written on it were these words, *Juan Almazarron fecit*.

This work of art was placed in the most conspicuous part of the drawing room, and covered by a gauze, in order to protect it from the irreverent attacks of flies. Don Marcelino was so enchanted with this masterly specimen of the art of Apelles, that he resolved on cultivating this vocation, and to devote to it all his leisure hours.

Like the *Bourgeois gentilhomme* of Molière, who, at the age of forty, suddenly discovered he was a poet, Don Marcelino, at fifty, awoke, and found himself an artist, and inspired with noble emulation and an ardent love for the glories of Murillo.

We leave the reader to imagine the monstrosities perpetrated by the master and his pupil. They found, however, numerous admirers, and among these the most sincere was Father Nolasco, who was a great friend of Marcelino's. This procured for the good monk the gift of a capital serge vestment.

The first attempts from nature made by our artist apprentice, were representations of interiors. His master, charged with the composition and picturesque arrangement of the objects to be depicted, went to the

kitchen, where he got hold of a fryingpan, a candlestick, and four kitchen dusters; he abstracted some vegetables out of the larder, and, in honour of Rota, one of its famous pumpkins, which he destined to form the principal object in the picture. The pumpkin was placed upon the four kitchen cloths, which fringed it round like a corporal's ample beard; some turnips were in the foreground, and some asparagus were scattered like sentinels here and there. The candlestick, painted a bright vermillion, and placed in the background, reflected its red light on the turnips, transforming them into beetroot, and shone on the kitchen cloths, making the pumpkin look like the face of the celebrated pirate, Barbarossa.

After the happy completion of the picture, which was to adorn the dining room, the pupil emboldened, tried his hand on some saints. The dimensions of the frames increased with the enthusiasm of the painter, and at last attained to the dignity of a colossal St. Christopher, which all the country flocked to see, and which made a great sensation. Father Nolasco, who was prouder of the composition than even its author, brought a great many persons to admire

the saint. "This way, this way!" said he, dragging them to the opposite extremity of the studio; "this is the place—a picture, the king, and the sun, ought all to be looked at from a distance"—and then pointing out the brushes and colours, he would add, "Miguel, these are more valuable than your crops; how can he fail to paint admirably when he has such a variety of brushes and colours? His painting badly with such materials would be strange indeed. Where there is good meat there can be no bad kitchen."

After this triumph of St. Christopher, the passion of Don Marcelino took the bit in its teeth; his ardour no longer knew any bounds, and he prepared a canvass five yards wide, and four high, to make an experiment in the historical line. He hesitated between the Capture of Rota by Alphonso, surnamed the Wise, about the year twelve hundred and something, and the taking of Rota by the Earl of Essex, who landed there about 1700, owing to the treachery of the governor of the fortress, who was an Italian, of the name of Scipione Brancaccio. Marcellino decided on the former subject, not because it was more

patriotic, but from its offering him an opportunity to paint turbans.

But at this stage of the affair some serious difficulties presented themselves, not artistic ones, for these did not exist for Almazarron and his disciple, but material difficulties. Don Marcelino, who was short, could not reach to one third of the canvass. It was Father Nolasco who discovered an expedient for placing the artist on a level with the object he intended to paint. He found out an old pulpit, which had been in the lumber room of his convent, the village carpenter put wheels to it, and the pulpit was placed before the gigantic canvass in the court, where the Don was painting in the open air, under shelter of an umbrella, perched on the pulpit like a preacher. Don Marcelino, along with his acolyte, executed the second part of his enterprise; but there yet remained the third, and this he could not attain to, even by standing on tip toe. The master, the pupil, and Father Nolasco, racked their brains in vain to discover some resource. Enthusiasm was succeeded by depression, just as low tide follows high tide on the beach.

It was, however, out of the question to

allow the castles to remain without turrets, the horses without ears, the heroes without heads, the Moors without turbans, the lances without pennons, and the sky without the large quantity of Prussian blue prepared to represent it. It became, therefore, indispensable to provide some means to enable Don Marcelino to distribute turrets, ears, turbans, and pennons. Father Nolasco proposed a scaffolding, the master a ladder; both these expedients were rejected as inconvenient and dangerous for Don Marcelino, who, being the person most interested, found at last a comfortable and safe mode of placing himself on the desired level. He bought a pack saddle, to which he fastened a strong rope, and attaching to the top of the wall a solid ring of iron, he passed the cord through it, and then winding it round his waist, he made the master and Nolasco hoist him up to the proper height. All succeeded to a wish, and our Don, his palette and brushes in his hand, soared into the air like a seraphim, to the great satisfaction of his assistants. But when the artist attained a certain height, the cord, which was new and tightly stretched, began to untwist and to run

round the reverse way with increasing rapidity. Seeing Don Marcelino, his arms outstretched and uttering the most heart-rending cries, revolving in the air, Father Nolasco and the master lost their heads altogether, let go the rope, and ran away, while poor Don Marcelino dropped to the ground, sprawling there on his stomach like a frog.

This misadventure, similar to that which cost poor Murillo his life, cooled the artistic ardours of our Don, and he laid down for ever the arms of Apelles.

CHAPTER XI.

DON MARCELINO enjoyed life most thoroughly. If any one had told him that a Frenchman (St. Pierre) could find no man perfectly happy, save a pariah in an Indian hut, he would not have laughed, because he was not naturally gay, but he would have been indignant at the impertinences and the paradoxes of those scribblers of paper. He walked through his garden and his house in a kind of tranquil ecstasy, and his sole regret was, that the day consisted of only four and twenty hours, and the year of only three hundred and sixty five days.

Don Marcelino enjoyed this quiet happiness for ten years, occupied in spending his well beloved Mexican gold pieces, but at the end of those ten years, the scissors of the Parcæ, in the shape of inflammation,

cut the thread of Don Marcelino's existence, for in the course of eight days, however little it was his wish to leave this world, he passed into a better life.

His death was very edifying. He did not forgive his enemies, because he had none; he left considerable sums of money to various charities by his will, piously recommended his soul to God, and, as a last proof of human weakness, requested that he should be buried in his uniform, with its stripes. His sister, Doña Braulia Toro, the widow of a muleteer, inherited her brother's wealth, and installed herself in his house. The famous portrait remained in the post of honour, and since the demise of the original, its shadows seemed blacker than ever. Father Nolasco never by any chance looked at it without saying a word in its praise, and devoutly repeating a Pater noster. Rosa was aware of this, and when the good monk came to the house, the mischievous young girl never failed to direct his attention to the portrait, certain that each time he would exclaim, "What a fine countenance!" and instantly recite a Pater noster. Her mother, who had remarked this little malice, lectured her daughter, and pro-

hibited her repeating it, but Rosa, with her habitual want of docility, paid no attention to her mother's remonstrances, and each time that she made any allusion to the deceased, the good father invariably uttered his usual phrase, and its inseparable Pater noster.

The morning after his conversation with Dolorès, Father Nolasco called on the widow, and said to her, "Doña Braulia, I have found you an excellent servant."

"I am delighted to hear it," said she. "Is she a sensible girl, and a good Christian? Can she wash? Is she neat, and, above all, not too rustic?"

"I do assure you she is quite a treasure."

"Father Nolasco," said Rosa, "don't you think that some one has given a shove to my uncle's picture, and that it hangs crooked?"

Father Nolasco looked up at the portrait, and said, "Crooked! certainly not; it is as straight as your excellent uncle's course in life was—may he rest in peace! What a good painting! Quite extraordinary! This Juan Almazarron was distinguished in his profession. The priest was saying lately, that there was a man at Madrid, who had

just painted a portrait of the Queen; his name is Don Frederico Madrazo. They say it is inimitably good, but not like this! If Juan Almazarron had been in Madrid, it would have been a very different matter. If they could but see this portrait! What a fine countenance! Pater noster....." which he continued to mutter in a low voice.

"What you are doing," whispered Doña Braulia, to her daughter, sure of not being overheard by Nolasco, "is very rude, and a well educated girl ought not to conduct herself in such a manner; if you do so again, I will give you such a pinch that you will remember it. I choose you to be polite, or I may as well give up trying to make anything of you."

"Mother, don't trouble yourself about politeness—there is a time for all things—and give me a bunch of grapes; you hoard them up like precious stones."

"Well bred people don't eat at every hour of the day," replied the economical mother.

"Father Nolasco," exclaimed the young girl, "my mother won't give me any grapes; she says it is low and underbred. Did not

my uncle Marcelino, who was so well bred, eat grapes till he could eat no more?"

"He did, indeed," said Father Nolasco, smiling at his reminiscences; "his muscatel grapes used to be brought in heaps from the vineyard."

"And as grapes are very fattening," said Rosa, sighing, "he was like a kid nursed by two mothers."

"I sold my muscatel grapes this year," observed Doña Braulia.

"Not true," muttered the young girl.

"What do you say?" asked Father Nolasco.

"Don't you think," exclaimed Rosa, "my uncle looks like the gipsies, with a plaster stuck on his temples for tooth ache, and a large bluebottle on his nose?"

"No, indeed!" answered Nolasco, looking earnestly at the portrait, "it is an exact likeness; this hand is just like his, and succoured many a one who has forgotten him now. He gave me the garment I now wear, saying, 'Father Nolasco, may you enjoy health to wear it out, and far longer!' 'And may you live to see it!' answered I. But my wish has not been

fulfilled a bit more than his desire for me will be, for my cassock will last longer than I shall. What a fine countenance!" added he, sighing; "may he rest with God! Pater noster....."

"Oh! oh!" cried Rosa running off. She had felt the very sharp pressure of her excellent mother's hard fingers, heartily applied to her arm.

Next day, Dolorès entered the family. She was depressed and timid, but submissive, having the greatest wish to please, and to fulfil properly her new duties.

She soon gained Rosa's affections, and Doña Braulia declared that she was quite satisfied with her. She was silent, hard working, neat, and orderly, and she possessed two excellent qualities in the eyes of her economical mistress—she eat little, and had very good manners.

"Dolorès is a very nice girl," said the lady, one day to her daughter; "but she is rather like a turkey, she is as robust as a torpid fly, and she walks like a spider on pitch!"

"Well said, mother!" replied Rosa, bursting into a merry laugh; "I do like

your comparisons when you speak figuratively; every syllable you say is correct."

"I meant to say that she is slow," replied Doña Braulia, embarrassed.

"Why, mother!" rejoined Rosa, eagerly; "do you think everything can be done without anyone doing it?"

"Don't say mother, say *mamma*, my chick!"

"Oh! for goodness sake, let *papa* and *mamma* alone! They may do very well for children who cannot pronounce distinctly, or people who don't know how to use their tongues, but I can speak plain enough."

"What a bold, impudent child you are! How did kidney beans get tails?"

"Do you wish to make a fine lady of me? No, no, mother! I have no objection to work like a Gallician mule, but I won't stand any polishing!"

"I don't want you to work; I have a servant to do that," said her mother; "but I wish you to sew, for you have no idea of it, and your stitches are an inch wide!"

Dolorès passed a quiet year in this

house, indeed we might say a happy one, if her heart had not cherished the memory of her mother like sad and precious ashes, and the remembrance of Thomas and Lorenzo agitated her thoughts constantly.

One day Rosa said to her, suddenly, "Dolorès, have you a lover?"

In the country, love is always the precursor of marriage. It is a fact so natural, so authorized, and so legitimate, that no one ever dreams of denying it; so Dolorès simply replied,

"Yes, I have one."

"You are very lucky," said Rosa; "but where is he? I have never seen him."

"He is gone."

"Gone! goodness! How do you know then, that he is still your lover?"

"Just as he knows that I am to marry him—because we love each other."

"An absent lover is like a goldfinch that no longer sings; of what use is he? I would not stand that; if I had a lover, it would be to hear him say fine things to me, and I would make him marry me immediately."

"Why are you in such a hurry to be married?"

"Don't you think I am quite right? to escape my mother's lectures, which are more tiresome than a huge fly buzzing at the hour of siesta. But when your lover comes back.....what is his name, by the bye?"

"Lorenzo Lopez."

"Oh, Heavens! if what they say is true, that he is so bad tempered, I pity you, my poor Dolorès! Well! if Lorenzo returns, and comes here to see you, my mother will make a fine explosion, just like an angry chattering magpie."

"He will never come here," said Dolorès with a sad smile.

"You could not even speak to him from the window, if my mother knew it. I can tell you, she is persuaded that lovers bring the plague!"

"I have no intention of going to the window, Señorita," said Dolorès.

"Don't call me Señorita, when my mother is not here; I have told you so at least eleven thousand times, already. With the fashionable light jackets, and smart cloaks, my mother has lately adopted, she

really looks like an ill tied up bundle, and Señora, and Doña suit her pretty much as a court dress of the Infanta would suit me, and on all points it is the same. Formerly she used to make good pastry, and sweet-meats fit for a king—creams, fritters, rice and milk, jellies, gingerbread, tarts—no one made them so good as she did; now, she singes everything she makes, or else they are not half baked, and no one can eat them. But, Dolorès, I do think if you have a lover, you ought to be pleased and merry, instead of having a face like our Lady of Sorrows; in all your excellent life, you never seem to me either to speak, to laugh, or to sing."

"There was a time," said Dolorès, "when I both laughed and sang; but my father was drowned, my mother died alone and without help, on the deserted sea shore, my darling brother went off in a ship, so far away that his absence may prove eternal; Lorenzo, too, is a soldier, and has left me also. So how is it to be expected, Rosa, that I can talk, laugh, or sing?"

"True," said Rosa, affectionately, with

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CHAPTER XII.

ONE evening Dolorès was busy in the garden. Her economical mistress, Doña Braulia, born with that kind of matter of fact sense so highly admired by the present generation, had transformed the flowery borders into a kitchen garden. Substantial cabbages, in large squares, replaced myrtles; potent onions infected the spot formerly fragrant with violets; and round about turnips usurped the ground where dahlias once bloomed.

We may easily imagine Rosa's distress, who shed her first tears over her poor uprooted flowers.

"You have doomed to death all my pretty flowers," said she to her mother, in an indignant voice; "soon there will be no other rose in the garden than myself. I

heartily hope that your cabbages may all become consumptive, your lettuces wither, and your nasty turnips decay!"

It was a disagreeable evening, and blasts of cold wind announced that winter was come. Dolorès was watching the clouds chasing each other wildly, like battalions preparing for combat, and listening to the distant sound of the waves, tumbling on the beach, while the atmosphere every instant became darker. A heavy black bank of clouds was rising on the horizon, covering all the space towards the south.

"Alas!" thought she, "where will my poor Thomas encounter the storm which is brewing? on sea, or on land, or in the grave? Perhaps I may be doomed never again to see this dearly loved brother!"

At this moment, there was a knock at the street door, and Dolorès ran to open it. On the threshold was a tall, fine looking lad, in a smart sailor's uniform. He wore a Catalonian cap on his fair, curly hair, and tears glittered in his bright eyes, and on his sunburnt cheeks, contrasting with the smiling happiness expressed on his countenance.

"Don't you know me, darling?" said he,

seeing that Dolorès was silently waiting till he explained what he wanted.

At this voice, a cry of delight emanated from the depths of Dolorès's very heart, and with the word, "Brother!" she threw herself into the sailor's arms. But this intense joy only lasted for a moment; the poor girl, accustomed to suffering, and weakened by continual toil, could not support the sudden shock even of joy, and sank down insensible.

At the cry uttered by Dolorès, both Doña Braulia and her daughter rushed in.

"What is it? what's the matter? who are you, young man?" asked the former.

"Madam, I am her brother," replied Thomas.

"If that were true, you would not have terrified her."

"But I assure you, madam....."

"Get along! go away instantly! You have no baptismal certificate with you, I suppose, and Heaven knows what your intentions may be!"

"Mother," said Rosa, firmly, "this lad is Thomas—Dolorès's brother: you have only to look at him to be convinced of it. They

are as like each other as a crimson rose is to a white one!"

"Hold your tongue, you impudent monkey!" said her mother; "and go for some vinegar to revive Dolorès. And as for you," said she, turning to the sailor, "be off with you, for you are not wanted here. A pretty affair, to be sure! to come into other people's houses, as coolly as Don Pedro does into his own!"

It seemed as if a prophetic instinct, prompted the widow thus to repulse the handsome sailor boy; if her money and her property ran no danger from his presence, there was no little peril for another treasure of much greater value.

Who does not gaze with feelings of pleasure and sympathy at those white vapours and rosy clouds, which float in the sky? Who thinks of analysing their source, what emanations have formed them, what currents have elevated them, or directed their course?

Precisely thus, without seeking for original causes, without entering into details, without describing their progress, may we compare these vapours and clouds, to the

gay, light hearted, rose coloured loves of the young sailor and pretty little Rosa.

Dolorès opposed the affair as far as she could, for she knew that Doña Braulia would be furious, but neither Rosa nor her brother paid the smallest attention to her remonstrances. Unfortunately, good advice given to rising love, is like drops of oil cast on a flame, which, instead of stifling, only causes it to burn more brightly.

“Rosa,” said Dolorès, “pray remember that your love affair is not prudent, and cannot end happily, for your mother will never receive any son-in-law, but a rich and well born man.”

“Then, if she waits for a son-in-law of high degree, she may wait long enough. I don’t like grand people. Not long ago, a party of fine gentlemen came from Cadiz. Holy Virgin! what sticks they were! Some had hats without form or shape, with fronts like penthouses, their arms dislocated, their clothes hanging on them like a waggoner’s frock; they were more slouching and slovenly than St. Serapio; one of them tried to pay me some compliments. ‘Sir,’ said I, ‘you ought to have your bones reset,

you are dislocated all over.' No, nó! Dolorès, fashionable people are for young girls with smart caps, and rich cloaks. Let every sheep browse with its own herd, my dear."

So in this childish passion, there were only light leaves and ephemeral flowers, all except the stem, which consisted of a firm will. They had been drawn towards each other like two rivulets; they flowed down the same slope, to unite in the valley, and to pursue together their joyous course through green grass and laurels. Thomas yielded to the irresistible inclination to anchor his heart now driving about without ballast; Rosa to the exciting pleasure of showing her mother by deeds, as she had often done by words, how mistaken her views were with regard to lovers. With the most dexterous skill, and with the most intense delight, she contrived to elude her formidable Argus, who was entirely duped, and she succeeded in frequently going to the window to talk to Thomas. We must say in honour of truth, that in these unsanctioned interviews, which were neither grave, nor sentimental, love was seldom alluded to, and laughter usurped the chief

place. The conversation was generally in the following style :

“ What is the matter with you ? ” said the lover to Rosa, seeing that she could not utter a word, not from emotion, or from any sorrow, but from a strong inclination to laugh.

“ Not much ; only I heard my mother say just now to Father Nolasco, ‘ my little girl (just fancy her calling me little girl, when I am fourteen and two months, and twenty days !) my little girl, ’ said the consequential lady, ‘ does not know even the word *love* ; she will probably attain the age of five and twenty without ever having looked a man in the face. Nothing can suit my plans better ; ’ and my plans, thought I to myself, are to marry at sixteen. You will be a pilot by that time, Thomas.”

“ I hope so, Rosa ; but we must wait. You are in much too high a position for me, and your mother will never give me her consent.”

“ What do you mean by a high position ? Miguel Lechugas, who cries in the streets, ‘ Choice fans ! when the paper is torn, the sticks remain good ! ’ is my mother’s cousin-

german; if she says no! take me to church, and no more about it."

"But what did you say to your mother?" asked Thomas.

"What did I say? I'll tell you what I said; I turned to Father Nolasco, and exclaimed, 'Father, just look at my uncle's picture,' on which he looked up, and began reciting his Pater noster, as usual. I took care to be out of my mother's reach, for she pinches me when I name my uncle."

"Really! why does she do that?"

"Because I do it expressly for the purpose of making Father Nolasco recite his Pater noster, and my mother is angry, instead of being pleased by my procuring this compliment to the worthy deceased. Since she inherited from my uncle, and aspires to be a literary lady, she has become as sharp as a demon."

"But to return to facts. Your only answer was making Nolasco look at the portrait?"

"No! I am coming to that by degrees: I have not lost sight of it. When Father Nolasco had repeated his prayer, I said to him, 'Father, did you ever in all your life see an uglier man than my uncle?'—'What

folly and impertinence,' said my mother; 'the child affects to be a wit, and her wit is pretty like my own, for, both together, we have no more cleverness than the wrong side of a pack-saddle. Pray, how do you make out that my brother was ugly?'— 'Why he was ugly all over,' replied I, 'but his eyebrows are the worst, for they are like a cat's whiskers, and his complexion is just the colour of quince marmalade.'— 'He had a fine face,' said Father Nolasco, who is about as good looking as my old uncle.— 'Well,' said I, 'the reason he was so plain was, that he never married.'— 'Go along, child, go off to the garden and water your lettuces, you precocious little girl!' cried my mother. Too happy to get away, I darted off to my room like a flash of light, while her grace came and locked me up. Why shouldn't I laugh? being shut up here came so *à propos*! In this way I not only tease my mother, which I do delight in, but I was all impatience to tell you that....."

"What?"

"That I am the happiest girl in the world."

"Why?"

"Oh! how can I tell why?"

"I know why I am happy, both because I love you, and because the captain says I am to sail with him soon, and to begin my apprenticeship as pilot."

"Where is he going to take you?"

"To Hamburg."

"So you are going back to India?"

"No; it is in another direction."

"Further off?"

"No, nearer—northwards."

"May God protect you! But remember, I don't choose you to return to Montévideo. Father Nolasco says that no one goes there twice."

"Don't listen to what he says about navigation. He has such a dread of water, that I am convinced he is afraid even of that in the font."

"I have something to tell you, Thomas."

"And so have I, Rosa."

"Well, you begin."

"No—the lady first."

"Well, it is a riddle; will you guess it?"

"I'll try."

"Then listen! My sister and I together form a compass, the point in front, the eyes behind."

"That must be a peacock."

"Famously guessed; and the two sisters? *Scissors*, you goose, scissors. Now, it's your turn to tell me a good one. Get on!"

Thomas, in his turn, said, "I am a pretty girl, encountering many perils, I cut without scissors, and I can join without a needle."

"The pretty girl must be me; encountering perils—me, again; cutting without scissors—me also, for I cut short my mother's lectures; but as to joining without a needle, I am fairly puzzled."

"Are you not to be joined to me without the aid of a needle?"

"So I am, I declare!"

"But that's not it; you've not guessed it yet."

"Then, what is it?"

"A sloop."

"Oh, Heavens! I hear my mother," cried Rosa; "if she sees me talking to you, she will beat me soundly I know, though I don't care; but she will block up the window, and I should care very much for that." So saying, she began to retreat into the room, but, running back to the window and putting out her head, she said,

"Thomas, don't forget to bring me some

lobsters when you return." Then she disappeared like a dissolving view.

How many follies like this, slander condemns as mortal sins, which are, in fact, very venial. How many young girls, from want of circumspection and modesty, expose thus their reputation!

CHAPTER XIII.

WHILE Rosa and Thomas were thus weaving their coronal of spring flowers, the year 1850 arrived, and with it the temporary reduction of the army. The two brothers Lopez received a pass, to enable them to revisit their country, and did not announce their arrival to their family, wishing to give them an agreeable surprise. But, in Lorenzo's eyes, surprise was not only a mode of increasing happiness, from all the sweet emotions caused by unexpected joy, his motive was not to give time to any one to conceal all that had occurred during his absence.

It was Sunday; the evening was declining, and giving place to the shades of night; the sun was sinking towards his nocturnal retreat, as if dragged down by

the weight of his crown of golden rays. The wind had freshened under the icy breath of night. The swallows had ceased their rapid darting flight, and their sharp cries; the timid owl alone, shy of light, hooted and groaned like a pariah in his solitude—a proscribed caste. The waves were lazily rolling on to the beach, their grand sonorous voice having subsided into the soft monotonous sounds of a low chant; and the stars appearing one by one, like the slow words of a bashful man, were assembling in the sky inviting the world to repose.

Two young men, with firm, active steps, were following the highway leading from San Lucar to Rota. Every moment their pace became quicker, as if each object they encountered recognized them, and cried “Get on!”

“I regret,” said the eldest, “that we did not tell our mother we were coming; I don’t think such a shock good for the dear old soul.”

“I don’t regret it,” said the younger; “joy prolongs life, and in this way I shall know what Dolorès is doing.”

“Hush, hush! Lorenzo. Dolorès is a

pearl, of which your distrust renders you unworthy."

"Estevan, you know what the proverb says, 'Distrust the bad, and don't trust the good.' Dolorès entered the service of Doña Braulia, contrary to my wishes. Why she did so, I have not yet found out. No doubt she had some reason, but she did not choose to confide it to me. I only know that she went away: a rolling stone gathers no moss. Why go into a stranger's family, when she could remain with my mother? Adding up all these whys and wherefores, I can't help being convinced that there is some underhand work."

"You are like the prophet Jeremiah announcing calamities from the earliest stage of the world. How unkind you are! Poor Dolorès will be very unhappy. She has gone into service, but into whose service? Into that of Doña Braulia, the widow, who has only one little girl, and who is more straight laced and particular than Saint Monica herself."

"I say nothing against the widow, but how can she know what passes in her house?"

"Brother," said Estevan, "don't say any-

thing more, unless to say some good of the girl. You are suspecting things which never will occur, and which never did occur; but it would be a just punishment for all your evil thoughts, if Dolorès had given you up altogether."

"Don't say that, brother, even in jest; it is a bad omen."

It was night when they arrived in the village.

"Let us pass by the widow's house," said Lorenzo.

"You can go there afterwards, Lorenzo; let us first go home."

"Come along, brother," said Lorenzo; "it is not two steps out of the way."

Estevan hesitated, but not wishing to arrive at home alone, he followed his brother at some little distance. The latter had arrived at the widow's house; at the lower window he saw a man leaning against the railing. Night had fully set in, and the man was standing with his back turned to him. Lorenzo could only distinguish that he was young and tall.

At this sight his eyes became distended, a mist seemed to rise before his eyes, he shook in every limb, like the earth when

lava is about to force a passage through it. He approached, without the sound of his steps apparently troubling or disturbing the man at the railing.

"Estevan knew something!" muttered Lorenzo, through his clenched teeth.

"Then," said the young man, leaning on the railing, in a voice which showed no token of any fear of being overheard, "you will love me for ever?"

"For ever and for ever!" murmured a sweet, gay female voice.

"And you will positively marry me?"

"Certainly; that is all settled."

"Even if violent opposition is made?"

"Yes; even if the Queen and all her army, headed by Father Nolasco, were to object."

"God help me! I am a dead man!" cried the unfortunate youth, falling like a heavy mass to the ground.

"I did it!" said Lorenzo, in a stern and determined voice. "We shall see whether you shall marry her, without him who has the best right preventing you."

"Lorenzo! is it you?" said the wounded lad, in a gentle voice, on recognizing his murderer.

"Heavens and earth! whose voice is that?" cried Lorenzo, trembling and terrified.

"It is I—Thomas! Don't you remember me?"

"You—you!" stammered Lorenzo, in an agony of horror and remorse; and rushing up to his victim, and kneeling beside him, he recognised, with terror, the handsome face of Dolorès's young brother. Starting up, and raising his arms to Heaven, he cried, "I am accursed of God!" in accents of the most frightful despair.

"No, no!" said the wounded boy, in choking accents; "He will pardon you, as I pardon you." And the poor lad fainted away.

"Come away instantly and save yourself!" said Estevan, who, in spite of his anguish of heart, retained his presence of mind.

Rosa had been shrieking loudly, and people were now crowding to the spot.

"Escape without a moment's delay," said his brother; "I will take care of the unfortunate lad, and perhaps God may yet spare his life. Save yourself if possible, and don't kill our father and mother with grief." And while Lorenzo was striking

his forehead wildly with his clenched fists, he pushed him into a little side alley.

Lorenzo disappeared in the darkness.

Several persons having arrived, the thought occurred to Estevan that if he went alone to his father's house, it might awaken suspicion. He resolved, therefore, to set off in search of his brother, who had much need of aid and consolation. He tried to glide away unperceived among those who had assembled, but he could not do so without being remarked.

In vain did he search in all directions for Lorenzo. He then went back to San Lucar, where he continued eagerly to look for him the next day, without perceiving that he was watched; and the same evening, on leaving a tavern, to which he had gone to see if he could hear any tidings either of his brother or the wounded lad, he was arrested.

CHAPTER XIV.

DOLORÈS invariably passed her Sunday evenings with the Lopez family, but since the return of Thomas, she looked forward with greater delight than ever to those hours of rest, which she now devoted to her brother in their former dwelling. Thomas had gone straight thither on landing; and the Lopezes, who considered him quite as their own child, would not hear of his living anywhere else.

The brother and sister had passed the evening as usual, Dolorès speaking of her poor mother, and Thomas trying to divert her thoughts, by an animated account of his various voyages, and of his good and evil fortunes.

“All that is very well, Montévideo,” said Father Nolasco, on this subject; “but it

would have been much better if you had avoided all these hazards and contrarieties. Would you not have been far happier and more tranquil looking after Gil Piñones' pigs?"

"Father Nolasco," answered Thomas, "do you see these clouds?"

The worthy man looked up at the sky, and said, "Yes, I see them; what of them?"

"Tell them to remain still, and you will see if they obey you."

"A fine comparison! They have too good a guide to continue in repose."

"Well, Father, I have the same guide, who tells me to persevere in my path."

"Was there ever a more cunning serpent? The sea to you is like light to butterflies. You will never be at rest till the ocean swallows you up in its mighty jaws."

"Adieu, Dolorès!" said Thomas, at the end of the evening.

"Are you going away already?" asked she, sadly.

"I have business," said her brother, with an air of importance.

"He cannot contrive ever to sit still," observed Father Nolasco.

"Thomas, Thomas!" rejoined his sister, who guessed where he was going, "you don't mean then to follow my advice?"

"Why, Dolorès," replied Thomas, smiling, "are you going to give me a sequel to Father Nolasco's sermon? Come, I will give you a parting bit of advice, and tell you an old saw. Let the clouds rain and the sun shine, old men grumble and young men make love."

"If I were the queen, and had a daughter a princess, I would not think her too good for him," said Dolorès, following her brother with her eyes.

"What a charming lad he is become," said Melchiora; "I never tire looking at him."

"He has just the same disposition he always had," added Catherine; "the same merry, taking ways, the same gaiety and frankness."

"It is very true," said Father Nolasco; "if he were a little less headstrong, he would be perfect."

At the moment when the catastrophe occurred, which we have just recounted, Dolorès was preparing to return to her mistress's house, when that alarming cry of

"a man hurt" was rapidly circulated in the village.

When this mournful phrase flies through a small country village, the effect which it produces is most touching. Songs, laughter, or games, are stopped in an instant, and a gloomy silence ensues, followed by exclamations of grief and horror; pale and terrified women rush from every house, hastily repairing the disorder of their dress, running as fast as they can to the place of the catastrophe, and anxiously murmuring, "My husband! my son! or my brother!" If it is any sudden quarrel, these courageous heroines never hesitate to interpose bravely between the angry disputants, through pure love, without fearing either their anger or their blows. This proves that the ideal devotion which the heart may attain, is even more complete and holy in uncultivated nature than in romantic creations, for the ideal of sentiment reigns in the heart, and not in the imagination.

"It is Thomas, the son of poor dead Thomase," said some women in the street.

"What do they say?" asked Dolorès, whose ears caught the sounds of the two names of her mother and her brother.

“What were they saying?” And she sank into a chair, not having strength to stand upright.

Catherine rushed down to the street, and ran as quickly as she could after the women who had just passed.

“I did not make out what they said,” replied Melchiora to Dolorès, more dead than alive, having caught the sound of the same names.

Father Nolasco had heard nothing, and Mateo was in the courtyard.

At this moment a group of men approached slowly and silently, carrying the wounded boy on a ladder. He was stretched on it without movement, white as jessamine cut from its stalk; he seemed sleeping, equally devoid of pain and anger.

“My brother!” cried Dolorès, in a suffocated voice, crossing her hands on her chest, by a convulsive movement.

“Thomas—Heavens!” said Mateo, in horror. “Who can the wicked wretch be that could assault such an innocent lad?”

“No one knows,” answered the men.

“Thomas, my son, you do not hear me,” said Father Nolasco, taking in his hands the livid ones of the poor boy. “Is he

dead?" asked he, touching his cold forehead. No—run quickly for the surgeon."

"He is just coming," said one of the men.

Thomas was laid on the bed which had belonged to Lorenzo. The surgeon arrived, examined the wound, dressed it, administered a cordial, and said on going away to Father Nolasco,

"As soon as he recovers consciousness, administer the last sacraments to him, for he cannot live through the night."

Father Nolasco placed himself by the bedside of the poor dying boy, who opened his eyes in a few moments, saying, "Where am I?"

"In my house," said the kind old woman, "in the bed of my Lorenzo."

"I must leave it—take me out of it," said Thomas, in a voice of terror.

"Why? my son."

"Because if I die, Lorenzo will never consent to sleep in it again."

"But you will get well in it," replied Melchiora.

"No, no," said the poor lad, "I must die;" and turning his eyes on Father Nolasco, he continued, with a faint smile,

"you see, father, that after all, my death has not been caused by the sea."

"So much the better for you, my dear son, who are now about to die the death of a saint, surrounded by those who love you, and having me by your side to administer the Holy Sacraments."

The Alcalde came to receive the declaration of the murdered boy. Thomas replied, that he had been wounded by mistake, according to what he had heard the murderer say, who was quite unknown to him; but whoever he might be, he pardoned him freely.

All present now retired, in order to leave Thomas alone with Father Nolàsco, that he might make his dying confession to him.

When this was terminated, the father having asked Thomas if he had anything else on his conscience, the poor lad replied,

"I have something which troubles me, father; I did not quite tell the truth a few moments since."

"How do you mean, my son—a few moments since?"

"Yes," said the dying lad, I told the Alcalde that I did not know my murderer."

"And do you know him?"

"Under the seal of confession, yes, father, I know him."

"And who is it?"

"That, father, I will not tell; my conscience does not reproach me for being silent."

The unfortunate youth was seized with a violent attack of vomiting of blood, and in the agitation caused by this accident, Dolorès contrived to escape from the vigilance of the women who had been detaining her. She precipitated herself into the chamber, her eyes wildly staring, and as pale as the white marble effigy on a tombstone.

"Poor Dolorès!" said her dying brother, in a faint, stifled voice, while tears trickled from his eyes, already dimmed by the shadows of death, but still mild and gentle, though struggling with the last glimmering of life.

"He requires rest, you had better retire," said Father Nolasco, committing Dolorès again in a half fainting state, to the care of the women who had followed her; "you trouble his parting soul." Then returning towards the dying lad, he gravely said,

"Think now solely of God, who is your Father, and calls you to Himself."

"I think of Him alone," replied Thomas, raising his eyes to Heaven, still glittering with tears.

"And now, my son, raise your heart towards the Merciful Lord whom you are so soon to see, and die in peace. I am left on earth to pray for your soul, as if you were my own child."

Thomas gently pressed the hand of the good priest, smiled, and closed his eyes to open them no more.

Then in a whisper, but soon in a louder voice, and even in the midst of all the lamentations of those around, these terrible words passed distinctly from one to another, "He is dead."

"How sad! how dreadful!" exclaimed the women, sobbing; "the bells will sound of their own accord. What iniquity, to kill this poor innocent boy, who never did harm to any one, not even in thought."

"He pardoned his assassin too," said others, weeping; "he was an angel! he died as he lived, without injuring any human being. His death is like that of Abel."

Dolorès seemed petrified—her eyes shed

no tears, her lips uttered no groans, and it was only by her nervous trembling, that it could be ascertained she was still alive. The good women placed a bit of scarlet cloth on her heart, they sprinkled her face with fresh water, but her state of collapse resisted every remedy. At last she slowly revived, and suddenly starting up, went to a press that Melchiora had appropriated to Dolorès's use in this room, and taking from it all the money she had amassed by so much hard toil, and so carefully hoarded, intending to reserve it for the purchase of her wedding clothes, she gave it to the sympathizing old woman, faintly whispering, "For the coffin, Melchiora, and for the funeral service; I wish him to have a proper funeral, and the prayers of the faithful." Having said this, she uttered a low groan, and fell heavily on the floor.

CHAPTER XV.

ESTEVAN had been conveyed to Seville, and was to be judged by a court martial. During his examination, he maintained with calmness and firmness that he was not the author of the crime imputed to him. He had been recognized by the gardener of Doña Braulia, who was the first to arrive on the spot where the catastrophe occurred, and who had spoken to him. Estevan did not deny his presence, but he denied being guilty of the murder. He was told, that as he was there when the fatal shot was fired, he must have seen the assassin, but this he denied, which only increased the circumstantial evidences of culpability accumulating against him: these were, his departure, or rather flight, from Rota, at such a late hour, though he had stated that Rota was

the object of his journey; the agitation with which he next day visited the different taverns in San Lucar, trying to learn what was said about the murder, and whether the wounded man was dead; the trouble and hesitation of his answers; all these things testifying so strangely against him, and the crime being so horrible, sentence of death was unanimously pronounced against him by the judges.

Estevan listened to his sentence with equanimity. A violent death must indeed be less horrible when incurred as a sacrifice, than when encountered as an expiation.

At the moment when the condemned criminal was about to be conveyed out of the hall, a young man emerged from the crowd, and suddenly advanced with a firm step before the tribunal. The livid paleness of his energetic features did not seem to be produced by the emotion of the moment. It seemed rather the natural complexion of the face, where nothing living yet lingered, save the gloomy fire of his bright black eyes.

"This man is innocent!" said he, in a stern, firm voice, to the judge.

"How do you know this, and how will you prove it?"

"By giving up the criminal."

"When?"

"This instant."

"Produce him."

"He is here."

"Who is it?"

"Myself."

"You?"

"Yes, I am the man! I acknowledge it—I swear it."

There was a moment of silence, from the surprise and stupefaction caused by this scene.

"My brother!" cried Estevan at last, "what have you done?"

"Could you really believe," replied the other, "that I would allow you to die? did you think me capable of such infamy? I know I never was good, I have always had within me the enemy which has eventually destroyed me; but there is a wide distinction between that, and being so base a coward, as to allow an innocent brother to suffer in my place. I hoped to effect your escape from prison, but I failed, for no good action can prosper when attempted by one

who is forsaken by God. Let the law therefore smite the guilty one, and let that sentence be accomplished on me. 'He who takes the sword shall perish by the sword.' Adieu! console our parents, and beg her I so dearly loved, to forgive me."

At this unexpected incident, the council suspended its sitting, and Lorenzo was taken to prison instead of Estevan, who was instantly liberated; but the latter seemed utterly thunderstruck—he was speechless and motionless. Suddenly he felt his arm grasped, and he was dragged away from this fatal spot; offering no resistance, he allowed himself to be taken to a house, the door of which was shut the moment he entered it.

"Courage, courage!" said a person, offering him some wine; "your friends entreat you to take courage."

Estevan raised his eyes, and looked for the first time at him who had brought him here.

"Is it you?" cried he, "and you have had the courage....."

"Friends are reserved for such occasions," said his conductor; who was no

other than his old neighbour, the coast-guard.

“And you were actually going to allow yourself to be killed!” said Pepa, who had hurried to join them, and now embraced Estevan, weeping.

“How could I denounce my brother?” replied he.

“This very instant,” said Canuto, “you must set off by steam for San Lucar, and thence proceed to Rota. What your eyes do not see, your heart does not feel so bitterly!”

“Pardon me,” replied Estevan, whose energies were returning; “I must go to my brother.”

Pepa and her husband tried in vain to dissuade Estevan from his intention. Canuto accompanied him; but when they arrived at the prison, as if their visit had been expected, they saw coming towards them the lawyer who had defended Estevan.

“The prisoner,” said he, “sends me to meet you, because he finds himself quite unequal to seeing you—it is from no want of courage, for he is resigned and calm, nor is it from any want of affection; it is through interest in you, who could not see

him without experiencing a degree of grief, the more distressing that it will be less transitory than his. He begged me to say that if the wishes of a man about to die are sacred, you must listen to his entreaties, and leave this instantly, granting him this last consolation in order that you may console your parents. When you are with them, you are to open this letter; it is his last communication with this world, for since he dictated it to me, his thoughts are wholly absorbed by eternity, which appears so overwhelming at the moment of death. Do not despair, and if anything can be done in his favour, it shall be done."

At these words, the unhappy brother relapsed into his state of miserable despondency. The good coastguard, a man of few words, but a devoted heart, dragged away Estevan.

"Courage, courage!" repeated he, "you must meet misfortune bravely. Go home at once; what good could you do here?"

And while speaking thus, he urged him along to the river, where a boat was on the point of setting off for San Lucar. He saw him embark in it, paid his passage, recommending him to the care of a sailor

with whom he was acquainted, and did not leave him till the boat sailed.

What pen could attempt to describe the successive scenes of despair in the house of the Lopez family, once so happy, when they heard the disastrous intelligence Estevan was forced to impart. Who can depict the deep desolation, the cruel grief caused by these repeated shocks? all that could be said would fall far short of the reality, just as the pencil does, when attempting to paint fire or water, unable to impart to them either heat or motion.

In the midst of this affliction, Father Nolasco read Lorenzo's letter; it was as follows:

"No one ever asked pardon in vain of his God or his parents. The forgiveness that I have already implored from God, I now entreat from you, my beloved ones, whom I have so ill repaid for all the affection you have shown me. Do not grieve for my fate, I only suffer what I deserve, and I receive it with resignation, both as a chastisement and as an expiation. May God reward you, brother, for your unselfish devotion to me! If I had lived, I would gladly show my gratitude by kissing

the very ground you passed along. There is one thing you must promise me, in order that I may die in peace—support and protect the poor girl on whom I have brought such sorrow; marry her, and render that life happy which I have made so miserable—make this engagement when you read my letter, for the sake of him who is about to die; the thought that you will conform to my wish, is the only consolation that I take with me from this earth. Forgive me, and pray for me to a merciful God, our sole refuge.”

When the reading of this letter was concluded, in the midst of tears and lamentations, Estevan approached the couch on which the unhappy Dolorès was lying, like a corpse.

“Dolorès,” said he, “the last wishes of my brother are sacred—you can have no other husband than myself, and I no other wife than you—he relies on our complying with his dying request, and we must yield to it.”

Dolorès said nothing, but continued sobbing.

“If you do not consent,” said Estevan, anxiously, “it is a proof that you do not

love him, and that you despise me and my family — promise Dolorès, for time presses.”

“ I promise,” replied Dolorès, feebly ;
“ I will do what he wishes, and you desire.”

CHAPTER XVI.

THIS agony had endured for six days. The poor mother was in constant convulsions; the father had become suddenly aged, and his figure, hitherto so robust and upright, was now bent like a tree crushed by a storm. Dolorès' life was almost despaired of. Catherine was inspired with strength by her filial devotion not to succumb to sorrow; Estevan, overpowered by misery, gave no utterance to his despair, in order not to aggravate that of his family. Father Nolasco alone was calm, and was now in his turn the guardian angel of these worthy people, as they had once been his. He took charge of them all, exhorting them by the most forcible arguments, to resignation, even under the most cruel trials, appealing to the will of God, and to the

example of His Blessed Son. Sometimes, when his voice was raised while praying thus earnestly, his well known and loved accents reached the ear amid the mournful silence, with all the charm of consolation, fond memory, and hope; as a tie uniting the living with the dead, and this earthly life to a better.

The neighbours, who never failed daily to show their interest and sympathy for this unfortunate family, one morning waited in the house to see the physician.

"The father causes me most anxiety," said he, "though apparently the most calm."

"And Dolorès, sir, ought she to receive the last sacraments?"

"We need not think of that as yet; she is young, so there is hope still—a crisis might yet save her."

At this moment the door of the house was violently burst open, and Canuto, exhausted, panting, and covered with dust, rushed in, shouting out, "My friends, while we have a gracious God we have mercy!—pardoned!—pardoned!"

He said no more—he could say no more—but these words sufficed to restore to life

those agonized mourners. Estevan, in a state of frantic excitement, called out,

“What! pardoned?”

“Pardoned.”

“My boy, my boy!” cried his mother, starting up from the bed on which she was lying.

“By the Tribunal?” asked the father, standing upright like a young man.

“The Tribunal?—not at all; by the Queen. Long live the Queen!—long live Isabella!” shouted the coastguard, throwing up his cap in the air.

“He is not to die?” murmured Dolorès, faintly.

“When God pleases, but not before,” replied the coastguard.

The scene that ensued is not easy to realize, especially as those who participated in it have no recollection of what took place. The mother sunk into her husband’s arms in a deep faint; Estevan and Catherine supported their old parents; Dolorès’ strength was so far restored, that she could clasp her hands, and send up to Heaven the expression of her fervent gratitude; the good neighbours were sobbing from sympathy; the coastguard drew the back of his hand

over his moustaches, wet with tears. Father Nolasco alone remained calm.

"My children," said he, "you see that God afflicts but does not always strike. I told you truly, submit your hearts; hope is the last good which leaves us—if earthly hopes deceive us, those above are always sure. Thus our Divine Creator has transformed hope into a virtue, and ordained that his creatures should always cherish it in their hearts to prevent despair. The soul that desponds, my dear friends, is not that of a true Christian. Oh! charity! frequently place the pen in the powerful earthly hand of sovereigns who can pardon here below, if not for the sake of the criminal himself, at least in compassion to his sorrowing family, innocent of his sin."

The strange event which occurred at the court martial, had excited the most lively interest and curiosity in the public mind, but it had especially touched and affected the officers, who witnessed this scene of fraternal love and devotion. The noble simplicity of the manner and language of the two men, who were only in the rank of rustic peasants, deeply moved their superior officers. For those proud, bronzed coun-

tenances, those hands hardened by the use of the sword, do not prevent hearts from being generous and susceptible ; perhaps more frequently so than those of both sexes in society, who are fond of displaying emotion and sympathy on the surface of conversation.

Some high personages associated themselves with this sympathetic movement, and addressed a petition to the Queen. They appealed to the generous heart, that found words to pardon a regicide, at the very moment when he had committed the crime.

Words of clemency, that divine right of sovereigns, have never been supplicated in vain from the Queen of Spain.

"Is he free—will he come here?" asked the mother, when a certain degree of calmness had succeeded the first outburst of joy.

"If it depended on the Queen he would come. My friends, Long live the Queen!" said Canuto.

"God bless the Queen!" shouted all, with an explosion of enthusiastic gratitude.

"If it were in the power of her Majesty," resumed Canuto, "he would come here; but the Queen can only grant him his life,

and then comes the secondary punishment—the galleys.”

“The galleys!” exclaimed the poor mother.

“Yes, and that is only just,” said the coastguard. “He who commits a crime must atone for it, Melchiora.”

“But when Thomas forgave him—that dear angel, who died like Abel!”

“It is a circumstance in his favour, but it is not sufficient.” The mother began once more to weep bitterly.

“Melchiora, do not sin against God,” said Mateo, whose body was again bent, and his head drooping on his breast.

“I thought he was liberated,” replied the mother, sobbing.

“Why delude yourself by such false hopes, wife? the crime that he perpetrated is the most serious of all, and punishment must have its course,” said the worthy father.

“Where is he going, Canuto?” asked the poor mother.

“To the Ladrões Islands.”

“And for how long?”

“It is not known,” replied the coastguard,

who was, however, well aware that it was for life.

Poor Mateo understood the truth at once. In the meantime Dolorès made a sign to Estevan to come to her bedside.

"Estevan! since, thanks to Divine and human clemency, Lorenzo's life is saved, we are disengaged from the promises made to a dying man. So long as Lorenzo lives, I will never be the wife of another."

"I quite enter into your feelings, Dolorès," replied Estevan; "I love you dearly, just as I do my sister Catherine, but I have always looked on you as Lorenzo's wife. If we were to marry while he is still alive, it would be a shame and a disgrace. You must remain with us, Dolorès, I have ample strength to support another sister; and now I am doubly your brother, once through Lorenzo, and once through Thomas."

Dolorès began again to weep.

When Estevan was gone, Father Nolasco said to Dolorès, "My child! Rosa has commissioned me to tell you, that she does not come to see you, because she is resolved never to cross the threshold of this house, nor to see any one belonging to Lorenzo. I tried to convince her that she was wrong,

but nothing can change her determination, at least at present. She charged me to say to you, that so long as she lived, you could reside with no one but her, and I think you feel it should be so."

Rosa, like Dolorès, had passed suddenly from childhood to youth, by the purifying influences of many tears. The bright, fresh complexion, and the gay laughing air which had hitherto adorned her, had passed away for ever. Her petulant gaiety was extinguished, like a light by the blast of a hurricane. She no longer attracted Father Nolasco's attention to the portrait of her uncle, she no more uttered lively philippics against her mother. Her life became serious and earnest; she went constantly to church, and occupied herself in domestic cares, and was especially kind to the poor.

On the anniversary of the fifth of September—a day of mournful memories—an old priest, in the convent on the seashore, slowly repeats a mass for the dead. Two women, closely united by ties of friendship, come to listen to this mass; the one is young, grave, and gentle; her health has not suffered; she seems to have devoted

herself to a serious and useful life. The other is young, also, in deep mourning, pale, thin, and sorrowful. She seems drawing near the termination of a life of suffering and trial. The former is Rosa, the latter Dolors .

When they pass along, all say with an expression of lively sympathy, "What a change there is in Rosa, the daughter of Doña Braulia; she has become a good and worthy woman such as God approves." And they add with emotion, "Dolorès, poor old Thomase's daughter, is fading away like a waning moon. She has scarcely strength left to make the sign of the cross—her heart is dead within her—she was born to suffer."

"Poor Dolorès!"

THE END.

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